

STOCKBRIDGE SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, April 30, 2020
8:30 a.m.
TOWN OFFICES, 50 MAIN STREET

Present:

Terry Flynn, Chuck Cardillo, Roxanne McCaffrey and Mark Webber

Call to Order:

Terry called the meeting to order.

Agenda:

Terry began 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.

First on the agenda was Jim Wilusz, Director of Tri Town Health with a COVID-19 update. Jim said that over all the numbers have been reasonable. Since the beginning of this event they have secured an emergency grant of \$50,000 for the district to pay for services and supplies to combat COVID-19. He said that there has been a very good effort made with people working together and few complaints and non-compliance. Tri-Town provides updates to leadership, as done with the extension of the non-essential deadline to May 18th. Questions have come up on seasonal operations. Tri Town Board of Health permits public and semi-public town beaches; which typically run from Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day; these operations as defined by the Governor's Order are non-essential and until modified, public beaches are still closed; this includes the public boat ramps and docks. All are working around the clock to make sure people are safe, compliant and getting the right information. Jim extended his thanks to everyone and noted that the Berkshire County numbers have been manageable and have not seen the typical surge. Jim said that they have been tracking active cases and cases cleared. He attributes the low numbers to everyone working well together and taking this situation serious. Terry asked if the local boards of health over-see the tracing process and Jim said that they do and the good thing is that Partners in Health, a nationally recognized organization, have been working with the Governors' office and will be working with every municipality by the end of the week to assist public health nurses in case there is a surge. He said that as we open the economy there will be the need for good mass testing and a system in place for contact tracing; so that re-opening will not create a surge. The Berkshires saw the surge happening before other areas of the State but as we are starting to plateau; the rest of the Commonwealth is approximately a week or two behind. The goal is to slow the curve so not to over-burden the healthcare system; until there is a vaccine, COVID-19 will not magically go away. Jim said that he did not believe that the social distancing perspective will go away any time soon. There will be a new normal and what that looks like as time goes on remains to be seen. The Governor has

an advisory group looking at the phase in approach of which Jim is a part of the conversation representing the Berkshires. He referenced that as we start to open non-essential businesses, the question comes up of who will take care of the kids as schools and daycares are closed until July. There is a lot to be worked out over the next couple of weeks and Jim asked that people be patient and see the process play out. The Town's previous public health nurse system went out of business so they will be working with Berkshire Regional Planning which will cost a lot less for all three towns. The COVID-19 costs will be covered through the grant. Jim is hopeful that by the 18th they will have a set of protocols and better guidance of how large meetings will be handled as we move forward; it will be challenging and a slow process. Jim said that the last time they had a pandemic was 102 years ago and it is unprecedented but it is great to have great supporting leadership such as the Select Board.

Mark asked about the Governor announced State wide advisory committee to look at best practices and guidance on rolling out; re-opening the economy. Jim asked that someone from the Berkshires be a part of that committee for representation.

Next, the Board continued discussion on the draft warrant and articles. Mark followed up on the previous week's meeting and suggested to the Board to again look at two things. First looking at the basic operating budget Mark listed reductions of employee benefits and OPEB. Based on the recent auditor's report it was suggested that the Town to reduce OPEB down to \$150,000 and Mark suggested eliminating it completely for the year as the Town is well funded in there and it can be addresses in the future. Secondly, Mark suggested to reduce the annual IT budget, looking at other vendors to furnish it, reducing it to \$156,000 to \$100,000. These deductions would bring a week to week reduction of \$210,000, that resulting in a %2 overall decrease year to year, form current to next. Terry questioned the current OPEB fund and Mark said it is over 2 million. Terry clarified that what was being cut is only what is being added yearly.

Mark then suggested to hold the annual town meeting on June 15th or to push it out to the 29th, but that aside suggested avoided going past July 1st at this point. However, anything can be addressed. Relating to this, hold the annual town meeting in June and come back before November 1st and hold a special town meeting to address special articles for projects in town. Currently they are for: Chime tower, soldier's monument, highway 1-ton truck, part time planner, Curtisville Bridge reconstruction, Parks and Rec miscellaneous repairs and upgrades, Human Resource shared position, renovation of cemetery building, new COA van and infrastructure repairs stabilization.

Mark suggested only holding at the Annual the highway 1-ton truck for \$145,000 and the part time planner and the human resource position at \$15,000 and delay the remaining items. The bottom line is the Town is starting with \$2,454,000 in free cash and will have left \$2,269,000. It was discussed and agreed that a special town meeting could occur sooner than the fall and/or there can be more than one meeting.

Mark again stated that he was not looking to minimize the need and importance of some of the projects but was attempting to stream line the process; go to Town meeting with a clear Operational budget which reflects a significant reduction from the prior year and give people a little comfort that the Town is paying attention and also holding onto some reserves until hopefully we have a little better sense of where we are/where the world is. Related to that,

some items are not yet finalized with the numbers but hopefully would be by the end of June. Terry added that several of the projects have been existing items and would like to limit further deterioration. Terry supported the direction that Mark was suggesting, but noted that the Curtisville Bridge had been delayed in over four years and should go back on an active list. Mark agreed with Terry's point and agreed that the wing walls were an issue. Mark noted that the roof at Proctor Hall again lifted up and Chris Marsden was looking into numbers for repair and replacement; money is in place from prior appropriation.

Mark noted that he needed the Board's signatures on a National Grid document.

Chuck said that the previous evening the school merger committee met via zoom and that they were still looking for two members. He also questioned why the Board was not conducting zoom meeting so that the public could have input. Roxanne and Terry said that the current process of conducting meetings on live TV and streamed may offer a wider viewing audience and that items are being discussed at one meeting and followed up on at the next; allowing time for the public to comment in between.

It was suggested to next meet on May 7th. Terry suggested not rushing the process, allowing Finance ample time to respond. Mark again stated that the Board of Selectmen proposes the budget and then the Finance Committee responds; currently nothing has been proposed.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Terry adjourned the meeting.