

STOCKBRIDGE SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, May 7, 2020
7:30 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:

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. He added that their next meeting would be conducted via Zoom with the assistance of CTSB which will allow for real time participation.

The first order of business was to take action on the minutes from April 23, 2020. Terry made a motion to approve those minutes. Roxanne seconded; all were in favor.

Next Terry briefly addressed the recent report of the Finance Committee. Roxanne read excerpts from communication from Karen Williams, the Treasurer/Collector to the Finance Committee:

After watching the April 23rd and 30th Finance Committee meetings on CTSB, I feel compelled to address the committee's statement that the Town has \$6.1 million in uninsured funds and the unnecessary alarm that has caused.

I just had a lengthy conversation with our auditor, Dave Irwin, and he reiterated that there were absolutely no findings regarding cash in the FY2019 audit. Again, there was no audit risk.

I have attached a list of bank balances effective March 31, 2020 which gives you a better idea of current investments and how the Town's funds are insured, collateralized etc. To avoid future dissemination of misleading data by the Finance Committee, I will provide you with a monthly cash report from this point forward. There was discussion at the Finance Committee meetings about forming an Investment Committee. There is already one in existence, and I relied on the committee members' expertise when considering how and where the Town's OPEB funds would be invested.

Sincerely,

Karen T. Williams

Treasurer/Collector Town of Stockbridge

Terry then made his own comments regarding the recent report:

For the past year, we have been working to administrate the town in a calm, respectful, and productive way. The current pandemic makes this more essential than ever. With this in mind, it is important that, going forward, the Finance Committee honor the regular order, regarding the warrant for the annual town meeting.

Despite its good intentions, the Finance Committee's recent Report to the Town is out of order. The second paragraph of the report leaves out a key sentence, to wit: "Every article in the warrant for the annual or any special Town Meeting calling for appropriation or borrowing of money, the creation of a debt, or disposal of property of the town shall be referred to this Committee by the Selectmen, and the Committee shall either approve or disapprove every such article." Our board has not submitted the final draft of warrant articles to the Finance Committee; it has, through the Town Administrator, merely informed them of some of the articles it is considering. Regular order requires that the Finance Committee waits for the Select Board to send its final draft, at which time the Finance Committee considers each "money" article. In this process it can request more information, or come to a Select Board meeting to discuss the articles in more depth. The Committee then votes its approval or disapproval of each article and sends their response to the Select Board. The Select Board can then either alter or delete articles or leave them unchanged. The Finance Committee then presents its explanation to the townspeople at both the Baby and Annual Town Meetings.

Until the Baby Town Meeting, the focus of both boards should be on the content of the warrant articles, not on persuading the public of one view or another. The Finance Committee's recent report should have been sent to the Town Administrator and the Select Board, not to the people of Stockbridge. I never remember any Finance Committee submitting a report on the upcoming meeting to the townspeople, before it had received the actual proposals from the Select Board. The Select Board presents the agenda for the Finance Committee to react to, not vice versa. Addressing the report to the townspeople reflects the Finance Committee's overconfidence in itself, and its unjustified lack of confidence in the Select Board, the Town Administrator, and the other officials and employees in the Town Offices.

While it is important to maintain the proper lines of jurisdiction, we cannot allow this situation to damage the positive relations the Board and the Committee have had in the past. We have all been working together do what's best for the town and I am confident we will continue to do so.

Terry added that all of the people involved, the four at the meeting and every member of the Finance Committee, are all working hard to do what's best for the Town and have a genuine concern for the Town, especially at this moment, and would like to keep that presumption of good will and good intention and focus our efforts on working cooperatively together to do what's in the interest of the Town; and that is what they are determined to do.

Next, Fire Chief Garofoli provided a report on the recent fire on Cherry Hill and Terry read the following:

On the evening of April 17, 2020, the Stockbridge Fire Department responded to a Fire Alarm Activated that quickly changed to a report of a possible Structure Fire located at 24 Cherry Hill Road the Barn Building. The First Stockbridge Fire Department unit was on scene quickly and immediately requested mutual aid from several other area Fire Departments. As the Fire scene progressed a total of 13 additional Fire Departments were involved in assisting Stockbridge Fire Department either on the Fire Scene, in the Tanker Shuttle or providing Engine coverage for other towns who were directly involved. The Fire Departments present were Stockbridge, Lee, Great Barrington, Monterey, Lenox, Richmond, Egremont, Tyringham, Canaan New York, West Stockbridge, Sheffield, Becket, Dalton, and Hillsdale New York. All the Fire Departments present on scene and behind the scenes worked seamlessly together to extinguish the fire with the last units returning to service at 1:30am. Under the direction of the Stockbridge Fire Department all these departments came together as one with the common mission of

assisting the Town of Stockbridge Residents of 24 Cherry Hill Road. Because of their joint efforts the fire was contained to the barn building leaving the main house and maintenance garage unscathed. Portions of the Barn Building were intact but the whole building suffered fire, smoke, water or structural damage. No major injuries or secondary incidents occurred as a result of this fire. The team work and professionalism that was present within the 14 Fire Departments involved was remarkable and truly made the outcome as positive as it could have been.

Terri extended thanks from the Board to all the departments concerned.

Next on the agenda was continuation of discussion on the Annual Town Meeting budget and warrant items and the scheduling and upcoming elections and Annual Town Meeting.

Mark said that initially he was hesitant on going beyond June 30 because the rules for going past the fiscal year were quite restrictive, however DOR has loosened those conditions and rules and it is not as restrictive. Therefore, he suggested at a minimum holding the Annual Town Meeting at the end of June as opposed to the 15th or go past June 30th. Holding the meeting in the Town Offices' building currently would not be easy to accommodate all residents; especially with the gym holding less than 50 people with 6-foot distancing. It could possibly be held out doors under a tent but going further out might provide a better decision and allow more time to wrap up all warrant items. Terry said that it would make sense to make the decision to go beyond July 1st. Keeping the meeting on June 15th would need the warrant to be finalized by June 8th and Mark added that it would not give the Finance Committee enough curtesy to review. If held later in the summer there would not be the need to also hold a special and it overall provide a better comfort level for all involved. Chuck asked to set a tentative date and the Board agreed with the first Monday in August. Terry made a motion that the Board set a tentative date for the Annual Town Meeting and Elections of the first Monday of August. Chuck seconded; all were in approval. Mark continued that the Town Clerk would like to hold the Annual Town Elections for June 9th. Terry moved to rescind the last vote. Chuck seconded; all were in favor. Terry made a motion that the Board set as a tentative date for the Annual Town Meeting the first Monday in August. Chuck seconded; all were in favor (August 3rd) The Elections will be held on June 9th, 8 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Again, Terri is strongly suggesting residents to take advantage of the mail in process with instructions posted on the Town website. Voting will be held in the senior center with safety measures in place.

Mark updated that Ralph Juliano has been put in place as the full-time operator at the transfer station and that he is doing a great job keeping an orderly flow. Chuck added that Ralph is doing an excellent job and asked for residents to be patient and follow instructions.

The Board has a document to sign; an amendment to the GZA dredging project.

The next topic was the weed harvesting notice of intent. It was to be a GZA project but they are now going with Foresight Land Services of Pittsfield as they are a firm who is well versed with this type of operation and have worked with a number of municipalities successfully. Steve Mack has been working on the NOI and has spoken with the Western Mass Director of DEP about the most expedient and least resistant path going forward to get the NOI to allow for the weed harvester to get started.

Mark said that Barbara Zanetti Executive Director for the Chamber of Commerce representing the local businesses spoke with Mark and raised a couple of items for the Town and Select Board to consider. The Chamber has discussed having the Town urge landlords for rent forgiveness for down town merchants while they are closed and rent reductions through the end of the year. Some businesses who received the PPP loans will use that money to pay rent for a couple of months but going forward, rental reductions would be needed. Another is: if the Town receives CARES funding through the Federal Government, could it be used to aid small businesses with cash flow? Also asked if the CPC funding this year could be used for residents in need. Eligible homeowners and renters could receive up to an X number of months or a maximum of X to pay for a mortgage, rent, or utilities. Also requested was that the Chamber's rent for at least the month of May be forgiven with a possible renegotiation of the current lease. The Chamber itself is not eligible for Federal loans. Barbara added that she was grateful for anything the Town can do to support our local business community. Mark noted that there were no specifics; the CPC is an interesting topic and they would need to look into how the city of Pittsfield has structured this. The Board agreed that it important that they look into whatever can be used to assist the businesses we do have in Town. Roxanne said that it also would be helpful to know who in Town may be having difficulties paying rent, mortgage and utilities or have food shortages. Roxanne offered that they could possibly put something on the website with a specific email address to contact. It was agreed to work on this and noted that the process would be confidential. Terry said that in terms of the CPC funds there is a deadline and he questioned if this could possibly be waived. This could be revisited. Mark also noted that some towns are facilitating temporary operations outside of the normal scope. Mark is working with the Assessors office to populate a list of landlords and asked the Board if they wanted to issue a letter. The Board agreed that a letter asking landlords to consider rent reduction would be appropriate.

Next Mark discussed the Interlaken Bridge construction project and that the tentative begin date is June 1st. Alternate routes and signs will be going up. Mark added that the bridge will be closed soon after construction begins up until next spring.

Mark noted on Proctor Hall, that a wind storm lifted a section of the roof and thanked Vermont Roofing for making a repair at no cost to the Town. The Town has since received an estimate from Vermont Roofing to replace the majority of the roof, as opposed to continued patching, of approximately \$85,000 and there is currently about \$90,000 available from prior appropriations. This will need to go out to bid and Mark suggested putting it out soon. Terry made a motion that Mark proceed to put a bid package out. Roxanne seconded; all were in approval.

Adjournment:

With no further business, Terry adjourned the meeting.