

**TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE  
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022**

A meeting of the Southbridge Town Council was held on Monday, January 10, 2022, in the Council Chambers. Council Chair Daniel called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM

**AGENDA ITEM #1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** Council Chair Daniel led the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.

**AGENDA ITEM #2. ROLL CALL.** Present: Adams, Daniel, Daou, Jovan, Lazo, Marketti, Steeves. Absent: Ryan, Cotrona (7 present)

**AGENDA ITEM #3. CONSIDER AND ACCEPT THE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES, MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2021.** A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote on this item. Vote by show of hands, b 7-0 the motion carries.

**AGENDA ITEM #4. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS** (relevant minutes to be read at each agenda item).

**a. GENERAL GOVERNMENT.** Subcommittee Chair Ryan was excused.

**b. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.** Subcommittee Chair Marketti's next meeting will be 1/20.

**c. EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES.** Subcommittee Chair Jovan had no report.

**d. PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT.** Subcommittee Chair Adams had a recent meeting that resulted in several items on tonight's agenda, the next meeting will be 1/20

**e. PROTECTION OF PERSONS AND PROPERTY.** Subcommittee Chair Lazo had no report.

**AGENDA ITEM #5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS.** None.

**AGENDA ITEM #6. TOWN MANAGER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- COVID-19 cases continue to rise beyond what they expected/ have seen in the past
- There have been no known employee to employee COVID infections at this point in time, therefore they will continue operating at full scale at this time
- Chief Woodson recognized the DPW's efforts in assisting with a tractor trailer issue and with Mr. Zuzziac's sanding efforts to minimize further accidents due to weather
- Ms. Blakeley thanked the school department for assisting with plowing when they were experiencing staffing shortages

**AGENDA ITEM #7. PRESENTATION: SECOND CHANCE ANIMAL SERVICES BY CHERYL BLANCATO.**

- Cheryl Blanacto introduced herself and thanked the Town for their support and accommodation when they opened up their Southbridge location
- She shared a video from their grand opening highlighting the wonderful, affordable services they will provide to the community

#### **AGENDA ITEM #8. CITIZENS FORUM**

Donald Solinsky recalled that Mr. Marketti asked if the Town killed Vegas at a recent meeting. He noted that Town Manager McCall stated the dog was alive and well, however the ACO had said there were no options and the recommendation was to have final services performed on the dog. The Council voted to kill Vegas at that time, but then he was able to work with ARC to find a place for Vegas, despite the ACO saying she worked tirelessly to find placement for him. He believes his dog was used as a pawn to sign extensive paperwork signing his dog away and stating that if the dog so much as scratched anyone during the transfer, he would be killed. Although Vegas was not killed, that was the recommendation and he still feels this was very personal. Mr. Solinsky noted that he wears his “Southbridge killed my dog shirt” because they voted to do so and they killed his spirit by locking Vegas up for 4 months and the shirt represents that.

Scott Lazo of 36 Ellis road said that there were many lies stated in the last speaker’s speech. If Mr. Solinsky would have followed the letter of the law, things may have gone differently, but his dog is still alive. The bottom line is that Vegas was unmuzzled in an area where children play. This was a proactive measure taken by the Council to ensure that vicious dogs are handled correctly so that no one gets injured.

Councilor Jovan understands that citizen’s forum is a place where residents can come to speak on items not on the agenda, however there are many allegations Mr. Solinsky continues to make and the town may want to respond or make a statement highlighting the facts in this matter since there were hours of hearings that occurred, attorneys were present, conversations were heated at times, and they ultimately provided chances for Mr. Solinsky to correct the issues that were identified.

#### **AGENDA ITEM #9. VOTE TO CONFIRM THE APPOINTMENT OF RACHAEL CARNEY AS PRINCIPAL ASSESSOR FOR A 3 YEAR TERM EFFECTIVE JANUARY 24, 2022 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025 UPON SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF PHYSICAL EXAM AND STATE ETHICS TRAINING.**

A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Town Manager McCall spoke highly of Ms. Carney who has Town assessor experience and comes highly recommended. Councilor Marketti asked why this item did not go through the subcommittee and asked if a bachelor’s degree was a requirement for this position. Town Manager McCall said he did ask Councilor Ryan if they could move this directly to the Council because they wanted to expedite it due to the timeliness of Mr. Cournoyer’s transition and to ensure that they were able to move forward with quality candidates since the market is very competitive right now. Town Manager McCall said the postings often have a recommended amount of education, but they often indicate that the right level of experience relative to the position may be comparable in this. Ms. Carney is very qualified and has a level of experience that himself and Mr. Cournoyer are comfortable moving

forward with. Councilor Marketti asked why no salary was included in the posting, Town Manager McCall said he's not sure why it was not listed, but they typically post these jobs as step 1 salary. Councilor Steeves asked how many applicants they had for this position, he was unable to recall the total number but noted that they get some unusual applicants for almost every posting they have recently, but they had a number of people that met the qualifications. Councilor Steeves asked Ms. Carney why she switched from real estate to Assessing. Ms. Carney has a passion for real estate, took some time to do home daycare with her kids, and then took a position for her town's tax office because she wanted to work in that field. She ended up taking on conservation work as well and eventually she took interest in the Assessor position that opened up and has been doing that for four years. She prefers to work in another Town of her own because she is very active and enjoys boards and committees, but she would be unable to do so if she continued to work in her hometown of Barre. She's passionate about ensuring they are up to date with their inspections and their processes. Councilor Lazo asked if Mr. Cournoyer is able to offer assistance as needed, Town Manager McCall confirmed that he would. Councilor Lazo supports this appointment and thinks this is a natural progression for Ms. Carney.

Councilor Jovan said the MMA does require a degree, but he doesn't personally believe that needs to be a requirement since experience and qualifications can lend to the position. He noted this may be something HR needs to take up moving forward with job postings. Vote by show of hands, by 7-0 the motion carries. .

**AGENDA ITEM #10. VOTE A TRANSFER OF \$5,000.00 FROM TOWN COUNCIL RESERVE #001132.578100 TO TOWN MANAGER SALARIES #001123.511000 TO FUND THE TOWN'S MANAGER'S DEFERRED COMPENSATION CONTRIBUTION.** AGENDA ITEM. A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Vote by show of hands, by 6-1 the motion carries with Marketti abstaining.

**#11. VOTE TO APPROVE THE CABLE ACCESS DEPARTMENT REQUEST TO DECLARE THE LIST OF OUTDATED EQUIPMENT SURPLUS, AND POST ON THE MUNICIPAL AUCTIONS SITE.** A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Councilor Marketti would like to see accurate and complete websites where these items will be put up for sale, Town Manager Marketti noted there are a few sites they use, but he will make the Council aware once they are listed. Vote by show of hands, by 7-0 the motion carries.

**AGENDA ITEM #12. VOTE TO APPROVE THE CONTRACT CURBSIDE SERVICES OPTION (CONTRACTED BY THE MUNICIPALITY) FOR THE TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE TO COMMENCE UPON THE EXPIRATION OF THE CURRENT SOLID WASTE CONTRACT WITH CASELLA AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.**

A motion was made by Councilor Daou, seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote on this item. Councilor Adams said he has been very thorough with his presentations to the Council and public on this and stated tonight's vote will determine how they move forward. Councilor Marketti said the committee voted to go with contract collection like they have now since they

have the infrastructure, totes, and there would be no delay in service. There were cons associated with this as well, such as funding. He asked how this would work if it were tax based, Councilor Adams said everyone would be required to pay and partake in this if it were tax based. Councilor Adams explained that two funding methods include taxes or enterprise funds. They didn't vote on a finding mechanism as a committee, but the general sentiment was that it would be tax funded. Councilor Marketti said there are other fees involved with residents who opt out to go with other services because they often have to pay large amounts in advance, pay for new totes, to pay to have them picked up if they want to terminate service, etc. Councilor Adams said tonight's vote isn't on the funding source, it is on the contract, but he did note it is more expensive for the town to choose an enterprise fund over taxes.

Councilor Lazo is in favor of curbside collection due to the nature of this community's needs. He thinks further discussion on the funding is important, but it's something they can identify in the near future. He thanked everyone involved with the curbside collection committee that weighed out all options for the town. Councilor Steeves encouraged them to encourage people to reduce how much trash they accidentally produce because that will help lower costs. Councilor Jovan is glad they've continued to explore all options, he believes contracting is the way to go and thanked all involved with increasing recycling efforts and minimizing waste. He's concerned with whether it should go on the ballot in 2022 or 2023 for financial timing and override preparation. The biggest impact likely won't hit the taxpayer until FY 2025. Councilor Adams said education needs to start ASAP because a lot of residents will be nervous about this change and there may be a lot of questions. They'll be addressing the transfer station down the road, so there will be updates on that as they work through it. It sounds like the Council is in favor of the contract and the override. There was discussion on multifamily collection and if any particular homes should pay more or less on taxes for their service, however there are many services that are paid for by taxes even if they are not using all services at all times, but part of being a member of the community is financially supporting the schools, community center, trash collection, and all other services. Vote roll call. Councilors in favor: Adams, Daniel, Daou, Jovan, Lazo, Marketti, Steeves. By 7-0 the motion carries.

**AGENDA ITEM #13. VOTE TO APPROVE THE CONTRACT AND MASTER AGREEMENT WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECT FOR THE RECYCLING DIVIDENDS PROGRAM GRANT AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED**

**DOCUMENTS.** A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote on this item. Councilor Jovan said the Council had already voted to seek the grant, therefore this item was not taken up at the subcommittee level. Anna explained the results of the DEP's report on the Town. They didn't receive points for certain areas because they do not have all specific practices in place. Vote by show of hands, by 7-0 the motion carries.

**AGENDA ITEM #14. VOTE TO APPROVE ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS WITH CENTRAL PIZZA'S PROPERTY OWNERS TO ALLOW THEM USE OF TOWN LAND FOR PROPANE AND SHARED DUMPSTERS AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.**

Motion: Vote to postpone and refer back to the Planning and Development subcommittee based on the recommendation from Councilor Adams. A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote on this item. Councilor Adams said there was a lot of discussion and unanswered questions, therefore they want more time to review a solid plan since they have yet to receive that. This was voted on unanimously, however they'd like to be able to present a full plan to Council. Vote by show of hands, by 7-0 the motion carries.

**AGENDA ITEM #15. VOTE TO APPROVE A ONE-MONTH EXTENSION TO THE SHARED STREETS AGREEMENT WITH MASS DOT TO ALLOW TIME TO PURCHASE PEDESTRIAN CROSSING SIGNS WITH REMAINING FUNDS AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.** A motion was made by Councilor Adams, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Ms. Dean said there are currently no funds left at this time as they are all encumbered. The signs have been ordered, but due to supply demands they have not come yet. Councilor Jovan asked if they should extend this to two months to ensure they have enough time to get this situated. Ms. Dean said the one month extension was already provided through MassDot, so it is a pretty casual contract right now should they need to get more time. Vote by Show of hands, by 7-0 the motion carries.

**AGENDA ITEM #16. VOTE TO RATIFY THE AGREEMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERING SERVICES WITH BSC GROUP, INC. TO DESIGN THE CAPILLO PARK MCCANN FIELDS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PARKLANDS ACQUISITIONS AND RENOVATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES (PARC) GRANT AWARD FOR \$55,000, WHICH INCLUDES THE COST TO INCORPORATE THE HIGH LEVEL SKATEPARK CONCEPT FROM RAMPAGE AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.** A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Councilor Marketti asked how they would be paying for this if they won't be using stabilization funds, Councilor Adams said they would be going through bonds now since the other option was voted down. Vote by show of hands, by 6-1 the motion carries with Marketti opposing.

**AGENDA ITEM #17. VOTE TO RATIFY THE AGREEMENT WITH CROWLEY REAL ESTATE APPRAISERS, INC. TO PROVIDE A YELLOW BOOK APPRAISAL OF 76 CENTRAL FOR \$4,500 AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.** A motion was made by Councilor Daou seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote on this item. Several Councilors will yield to the strategy and vote yes on this to see what the appraisal comes in at, but they have reservations. Grant funding has accounted for many improvements in town but upgrades and additions need to be prioritized because these things all come down to affordability. Vote by show of hands, by 6-1 the motion carries, with Marketti opposing.

**AGENDA ITEM #18. VOTE TO APPROVE APPLYING FOR THE LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND (LWCF) GRANT PROGRAM TO REIMBURSE THE TOWN**

**UP TO \$100,000 AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.** A motion was made by Councilor Lazo, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Councilor Marketti said the town would have to come up with \$100,000.00 to receive that for a piece of property that is .06 acres. He is not opposed to grant funding, he just believes they should go in a different direction with the Rail Trail. Ms. Dean said the grant is “up to \$100,000.00” that doesn’t mean it will be that full amount, pending how the appraisal and scope of work come in. Councilor Adams clarified that the funding would come from the CDBG miscellaneous fund which would mean both portions are technically grant funded. Councilor Jovan asked if they would be able to present a plan to the full Council and public at the next meeting to bring everyone up to speed. Vote by show of hands, by 6-1 the motion carries, with Marketti opposing.

**AGENDA ITEM #19. VOTE TO APPROVE APPLYING FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS OFFICE OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM (MOTT) GRANT FOR UP TO \$49,999 TO FUND CENTRAL STREET PARKING LOT PROGRAMMING TO INCLUDE CONCERTS, A JURIED MURAL AT 1-11 CENTRAL STREET, COMMUNITY ART INITIATIVES, AND ALLOW THE TOWN MANAGER TO SIGN ALL RELATED DOCUMENTS.** A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. There was discussion on the future of measuring analytics, promoting events and initiatives on social media, and future partnerships to take on community activity development. Ms. Dean also noted that Southbridge Business Partnership may end up going out for this grant and that might work out for the Town as well. There was discussion on how these funds should be used, but the goal is to develop sustainable programming that brings people to the area and cultivates local business. Ms. Dean explained that the Central Street parking lot is meant to be a pedestrian plaza that helps people see potential uses for the arts and events that draw people in.

Amendment: If the grant is awarded to allow the Town Manager to proceed with the grant as well. An amendment was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Lazo. Vote by show of hands, by 6-1 the amendment carries with Marketti opposing. Vote on the item as amended, by 6-1 the motion carries as amended.

**AGENDA ITEM #20. DISCUSS STANDING DATES FOR SUBCOMMITTEE FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2022 AND TAKE ANY ACTION THEREOF.**

Town Manager McCall distributed and discussed the proposed meeting frequencies based on meeting trends. The current proposal has subcommittee meetings on Thursdays since they have longer nights on Thursdays anyway. This may allow them to have a better schedule that allows for staff to attend while they are working and allows people to plan accordingly. Councilor Jovan appreciates the notion of a standing calendar, but some of these dates may need to be changed because DPW is currently listed as the Thursday before Town Council meetings, so they may need more time between because items taken up at those wouldn’t make it on the next Council agenda. Councilor Adams supports having Mondays and Thursdays as subcommittee meeting dates, but letting the chairs determine which day they meet. Councilor Steeves asked if they would be able to shift the Town Hall long day to a day that is earlier in the week, rather than

Thursday to ensure they get everything done on time. Town Manager McCall said a prior Town Manager set those hours, therefore they likely could switch that and it may be a welcome change to some staff. The point of having these meetings on Thursdays was so that they don't have people using comp time for these since employees are already at the Town Hall until 8:00 PM. The new executive assistant felt it would be in everyone's best interest to have set meeting times and schedules to cut down on issues that arise with scheduling, posting, attendance, etc. Councilor Jovan suggested that the Town Manager survey employees to see if a change in scheduling would be favorable for employees. The Council is in favor of adopting some sort of regular schedule to accommodate all parties better.

#### **AGENDA ITEM #21. COUNCILORS FORUM**

Councilor Marketti

- Asked for an update on the cable contract, Town Manager McCall said nothing has transpired at this time but they will be going to the State to address issues
- Requested a list of all accounts and balances such as the marijuana revenue and sidewalk account
- Suggested they have better communication over town hall hours and closures in the future
- Noted several roads that should be considered for their next additions to the road improvement plan

Councilor Steeves

- Public hearing tomorrow at 11:30 AM for changes to the general laws on solar
- The library is doing a YMCA partnership for "wiggles and giggles" every Tuesday at 11:30 in the Children's room at the library

Councilor Adams

- Wednesday he will be speaking with the WooSox foundation about potential community partnerships

#### **AGENDA ITEM #22. DISCUSSION OF NEXT MEETING DATE – MONDAY, JANUARY 24, 2022 - 7:00 PM.**

**AGENDA ITEM #23. VOTE TO ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION, PURSUANT TO MGL CHAPTER 30A §21, (A)2 TO DISCUSS STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO NEGOTIATION WITH NONUNION PERSONNEL AND/OR TO CONDUCT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS WITH NONUNION PERSONNEL-TOWN MANAGER, AND PURSUANT TO MGL CHAPTER 30A §21, (3) TO DISCUSS STRATEGY WITH RESPECT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING REGARDING ALL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNITS, WHICH IF DISCUSSED IN AN OPEN MEETING MAY HAVE**

**A DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON THE BARGAINING POSITION OF THE PUBLIC BODY. TOWN COUNCIL WILL ADJOURN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION AND WILL NOT RECONVENE IN OPEN SESSION.** A motion was made by Councilor Jovan, seconded by Councilor Daou to vote on this item. Vote roll call. Councilors in favor: Adams, Daniel, Daou, Jovan, Lazo, Marketti, Steeves. By 6-1 the motion carries with Marketti opposing.

The meeting entered Executive Session at 10:06 PM  
The meeting adjourned from Executive Session at

Respectfully submitted,  
Mary Darling  
Recording Clerk

Documents used:

- Draft of the Town Council meetings minutes, dated 12/20/21
- Carney application and documentation for item #9
- Deferred compensation transfer documentation
- Cable surplus equipment documentation
- RDP grant award notice
- Central Pizza memo & documentation
- Shared streets extension
- PARC Grant documentation
- Central Street proposal revision
- LWCF memo and yellow book appraisal documentation
- MA Office of Travel and Tourism memo