



**MINUTES**  
**of the**  
**TOWN COUNCIL OPEN MEETING**  
**TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE**  
**March 27, 2023**  
**7:00pm**

**CALL TO ORDER** The Southbridge Town Council met on March 27, 2023, in the Town Council Chambers of the Southbridge Town Hall. Chair Daniel called the meeting to order at 7:02pm.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

1. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Chairman Daniel led the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Roll Call:** 9 voting members present.

Members	Present	Members	
John Daniel, Chair	Yes	Jacquelyn Ryan	Yes
David Adams, Vice-Chair	Yes	George Steeves	Yes
Joseph Daou	Yes	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Present</b>
Scott Lazo	Yes	Charles Blanchard, Interim Town Manager	Yes
Michael Marketti	Yes	Shane Woodson, Police Chief	Yes
Michael Montigny	Yes	Madaline Bonadies, Town Clerk	Yes
Jasmin Rivas	Yes	Susan Peghiny, Recording Clerk	Yes

3. **Consider and accept the Town Council Meeting Minutes, Monday, March 13, 2023.**

**Motion:** Councilor Ryan moved, and Councilor Steeves seconded to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2023 Regular Session of the Town Council.

**Additions/Corrections/Deletions:** Councilor Steeves said that in the Citizen’s Forum, under the discussion of 61a’s that was introduced by Ms. Doyle, Ms. Carney, Town Assessor, added that 61a applications are due to the Assessor’s Office in October.

**Item 18 (amended):** Councilor Steeves pointed out that the amendment is shown incorrectly (although it was correctly stated during the meeting). It is for a MassWorks Grant, not and Urban Agenda Grant.

Councilor Rivas’ name spelled incorrectly in several places.

*The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands.*

4. **Subcommittee Reports**

General Government: Councilor Steeves reported that they met on March 20<sup>th</sup> and there are 2 items on tonight’s agenda from this Subcommittee.

Department of Public Works: Councilor Marketti reported they are meeting on Wednesday at 6pm.

Education and Human Services: Councilor Montigny reported that the Schools Receiver is presenting the budget tomorrow and a meeting will be scheduled soon afterwards for review.

Planning and Development: Councilor Adams reported that there will be an April 3rd meeting.

Protection of Persons and Property: Councilor Lazo reported that they met on March 20<sup>th</sup> and items 9-24 tonight’s agenda have their recommendations.

5. **Chairman’s Announcements – none.**

**6. Town Manager's Announcements.** Mr. McCall reported that:

- An order for Compliance from the EPA was received to submit a series of stormwater reports. He has hired a consultant to help meet this deadline.
- A pre-construction meeting was held to review West Street Road reconstruction project. This project will begin March 27, 2023.
- A virtual pre-construction meeting was held on the South Street Water Main Improvements and Road Reconstruction Project. Work on this project will begin April 3, 2023.

**Motion:** *Councilor Adams moved to suspend the rules and move Items 9-12 to before Item 7, Presentations. Councilor Lazo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by a show of hands.*

**7. Presentations**

- a. **David Detmold & Liz ColdWind Santana-Kiser: Changing the State Seal:** Mr. Detmold explained the status and history of the effort to change the State Seal upon which the State Flag is based. He reviewed the items in the seal that are offensive to indigenous people in the Commonwealth. He said that 57 cities and towns have voted to support changing the seal, and many more are about to vote.

Councilor Ryan expressed support for the effort.

Councilor Lazo asked what the cost of this change would be. Mr. Detmold outlined some of the items that would be replaced as well as some that will not, and pointed out that there would be no direct cost to the residents of Southbridge. Councilor Lazo recommended putting the question on the ballot in June.

Councilor Rivas expressed her support for the change and explained her reasons for this support. She recommended the issue go before the General Government Subcommittee.

Councilor Montigny expressed support for the change and supported the idea of the question being on the ballot.

- b. **Darius Panozz of the ZEISS Group: American Optical's Lensometer Celebration and The Optical Heritage Museum:** Mr. Panozz provided details of the event that was held last Saturday. He explained what the Lensometer is, why it was important, and what a Landmark Designation means. He added that there are only 279 items around the world with this designation. He thanked the people and organizations that helped make the event a success.

Several Councilors spoke about the event and the museum and asked clarifying questions.

- c. **Proclamation Regarding American Optical Wellsworth Lensometer:** Chair Daniel read his remarks from the event:

*I am pleased to be here this evening representing the Southbridge Town Council and the Citizens of the Town of Southbridge.*

*The American Optical Company and the Optical industry in general have played a very significant part in the history of Southbridge. Those of us of a certain age either worked in the local factories or have family who have done so.*

*Times may change but our fondness for the AO has not.*

*As a result, we the citizens of Southbridge continue to take great pride in the work that was produced here. Consequently, the Optical Heritage Museum under the direction of Dick Whitney has become an integral part of the Community. Under his guidance and the great support of Zeiss Vision Care the Museum serves as a way for the Community to say "Here we are!". "We did this!", allowing us to pass on knowledge of our good works to the next generations and those who have particular interests in the optical industry.*

*As a representative for the Citizens of Southbridge, I thank the American Society of Mechanical Engineers for their honor adding to our legacy and leaving us with a bit more pride. We are truly grateful.*

*I especially want to thank Zeiss Vision Care for their continuing the legacy of producing exceptional vision care products that began at the AO, and, also for their wonderful support of the Optical Heritage Museum. By doing so, you allow us to stand a bit taller.*

*On behalf of the Citizens of the Eye of the Commonwealth, I have this proclamation ...*

### PROCLAMATION

*Whereas; The 1921 American Optical Wellsworth Lensometer is a groundbreaking device that completely revolutionized the optical industry.*

*Whereas; The device was invented at the American Optical Co. in Southbridge.*

*Whereas; The Lensometer is a significant step forward in the evolution of mechanical engineering.*

*Whereas; The Lensometer completely revolutionized the optical industry paving the way for advanced lens designs and measuring equipment.*

*Whereas; The American Society of Mechanical Engineers is honoring this device with its prestigious Landmark Status- an honor awarded to only 250 devices of various sorts in over fifty years.*

*Whereas; The American Optical Co. heritage continues today with Zeiss Vision Care, after the eyeglass lens unit of Zeiss and AO/SOLA Optical were merged in 2005.*

*Whereas; The Optical Heritage Museum is an important and integral part of the Town of Southbridge and at which the oldest working lensometer is located.*

*Whereas; Zeiss Vision Care also provides tremendous support to the Optical Heritage Museum located in Southbridge.*

*Now, therefore, the Southbridge Town Council hereby proclaims Saturday, March 25, 2023 as "American Optical Wellsworth Lensometer" Day and joins with the grateful citizens of Southbridge in thanking the American Society of Mechanical Engineers for this prestigious recognition. Further, best wishes and continued success are offered to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers and to Zeiss Vision Care for their important support of the Optical Heritage Museum and Southbridge's legacy.*

*Given this 25<sup>th</sup> day of March 2023.*

Chair Daniel presented copies of the Proclamation to Mr. Panozz and Mr. Richard Whitney, Executive Director of the Optical Heritage Museum. Several Councilors shared their appreciation of the museum and Mr. Whitney's work.

- d. Budget Presentation by Town Manager Charlie Blanchard: Mr. Blanchard distributed the initial budget proposal to the Council and outlined some of the significant cost increases and other highlights of the proposal.

There were several questions asked which Mr. Blanchard answered. There was a discussion of the budget, next steps in the budget process, and work that still needs to be done.

**8. Citizen's Forum** – there was no public comment.

**9. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Jordahn Witherspoon as a permanent, fulltime Police Sergeant, State Ethics in good standing, effective immediately for an indefinite period.** *A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson explained the process that was used to make the recommendations for the promotions in Agenda Items 9 to 11. He said the number of officers will remain the same. Assignments are being changed as a precursor to other departmental work.

Councilor Marketti said he did not see much change in the organization but rather work to replace some officers who have left. He asked if an additional sergeant would be needed. Chief Woodson said that tonight will provide the 6 sergeants the department needs.

Councilor Marketti also asked about Officer Witherspoon's pay rate, and Chief Woodson said he is being started at Step 2 so he will not be paid less than in his previous role.

Chief Woodson shared the qualifications of Officer Witherspoon.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 10. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Kaiten Neill as a permanent, full time Police Sergeant, State Ethics in good standing, effective immediately for an indefinite period. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson shared the qualifications of Officer Neill.

Councilor Montigny explained how much he values local candidates for Town positions, and how happy these promotions make him.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

Town Clerk Bonadies swore Officer Witherspoon and Officer Neill in as sergeant.

- 11. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Hector Melendez as a permanent fulltime Police Officer for the Town of Southbridge effective immediately upon successful completion of all medical and physical testing as required by Human Resources Civil Service, and State Ethics in good standing. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson explained that this and the next position being filled are already budgeted.

Chief Woodson shared the qualifications of Mr. Melendez.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

***The Board took a recess at 7:23pm and returned at 7:30pm to resume at Agenda Item #7.***

- 12. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Cruz Desrochers as a permanent fulltime Police Officer for the Town of Southbridge effective immediately upon successful completion of all medical and physical testing as required by Human Resources Civil Service, graduation from the police academy and State Ethics training. A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Lazo to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson shared the qualifications of Mr. Desrochers.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 13. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to reappoint Katelyn Jewell as Inspector of Animals, in accordance with the provisions of Section 5, Chapter 129 of MGL, effective May 1, 2023 through April 30, 2024. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Ms. Jewell.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 14. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Hector Arvelo, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Councilor Marketti asked that these types of jobs be posted so residents could have the opportunity to apply. Chief Woodson commented on the qualifications required for the these roles.

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Arvelo.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 15. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Kevin Arena, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Arena.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 16. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Matthew Carpenter, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Carpenter.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 17. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Esteban Carrasco Jr, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Daou to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Carrasco.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 18. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Jonathan Reich, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Reich.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 19. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Alex Rodriguez, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Rodriguez.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 20. Vote to confirm the Police Chief's recommendation to appoint Lucas Thomas, as a Special Traffic Constable for a 3-year term effective immediately through June 30, 2026.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson outlined the qualifications of Mr. Thomas.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 21. Vote to approve a Police Department transfer request for \$25,000.00 from account #001210-511000 Salary to account #001210-515100 Sick Leave to cover the additional costs of sick leave by officers and dispatchers for the remainder of the fiscal year.** *A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.*

Chief Woodson explained the reason for this request and explained the unpredictability of this type of expense.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***



- 22. Vote to approve a Police Department transfer request for \$3,200.00 from account #001210-511000 Salary to account #001210-519300 Tuition to cover the cost associated with tuition for an additional candidate to attend the April police academy. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson explained that this request is to send the 3d sergeant promoted tonight to the academy as only 2 were previously budget to attend.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 23. Vote to approve a Police Department transfer request for \$5,000.00 from account #001210-518100 Witness to account #001210-530000 Specialized Services Professional to cover the costs associated with the pending administration of a Civil Service Assessment Center for the promotion of two (2) Sergeants to the rank of Lieutenant. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson explained why this request is being made.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 24. Vote to accept the MED-Project LLC grant in the amount of \$1,300.00 for the purpose of supporting Law Enforcement Agencies in the collection and disposal of unwanted medicine. A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.**

Chief Woodson explained that this service is to allow residents to dispose of prescription drugs safely.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 25. Vote for Town Council to waive all permit fees associated with the Fire Station project. A motion was made by Councilor Lazo and seconded by Councilor Ryan to vote this item.**

Chief Hulyk explained why they were making the request and outlined the major fees that would be involved, saying that the total would be roughly \$323,000.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

- 26. Vote to ratify the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) Health and Dental Insurance Renewal for the Blue Cross/Blue Shield plans effective July 1, 2023 and to authorize the Town Manager to sign all related documents. A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item. The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.**

- 27. Vote to ratify the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) Health and Dental Insurance Renewal for the Blue Medicare RX effective July 1, 2023 and to authorize the Town Manager to sign all related documents. A motion was made by Councilor Ryan and seconded by Councilor Steeves to vote this item.**

Councilor Steeves outlined the details of the changes to the cost and features of Health Plans.

***The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.***

## **28. Councilors Forum**

### Councilor Rivas:

- Thanked Margaret Morrissey and Gerry Maldonado from Quinsigamond Community College for organizing free Tax Prep Services at the library.
- She will be doing voter registration events and outlined the dates and locations.
- The first episode of Youth Voices with Councilor Rivas is available. Click [HERE](#) to watch.

Councilor Lazo:

- Said that a petition to “Take Our Schools Back” is being circulated in order to add this question to the ballot. He asked that residents sign it, and he can provide a copy to those who want to circulate it.
- Suggested that the Councilors beware with the proposed budget because of many past expenditures.

Councilor Montigny: Suggested looking into the rock of the “late great James Deneson” and spoke about his enthusiasm about and possibilities for the site. *Note: the rock is spelled Dennison, but the man was Deneson.*

Councilor Marketti:

- Announced that there will be a DPW meeting this week and outlined some of the items to be addressed.
- One more curbside trash collection meeting will be held on April 6<sup>th</sup>. He will bring their recommendation to the Council on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Councilor Ryan lauded Councilor Marketti’s work on this issue.

Councilor Adams:

- Wished the Wells (?) Department on their attempt to win the 2023 Affordable Housing Reader’s Choice Award.
- Congratulated the officers who were promoted and appointed this evening and wished them the best of luck.
- ARPA is meeting on April 6<sup>th</sup>, and he reviewed the monies left.
- Town Manager Search Committee will vote on Thursday on the firm to help with this effort.

**DISCUSSION OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- April 10, 2023 at 7:00pm.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** *Councilor Lazo moved to adjourn the meeting of the Southbridge Town Council. Councilor Ryan seconded and **the motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.** The meeting was adjourned at 8:43pm.*

Respectfully submitted by,

Susan Peghiny  
Recording Clerk