



## TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE

### A JOINT GENERAL GOVERNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE /TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

May 12, 2022 at 7 PM or Immediately following joint  
Education & Human Services Subcommittee/Town Council Meeting  
VETERANS ROOM

#### Meeting Minutes

1. Call to Order

2. Roll Call

<p><b>Subcommittee Members Present: (4)</b></p> <p>Chairwoman Jacquelyn Ryan, Town Councilor</p> <p>Michael Marketti, Town Councilor</p> <p>Gus Steeves, Town Councilor</p> <p>Martena Shea, Citizen Member</p> <p><b>Subcommittee Members Excused: (1)</b></p> <p>Denise Clemence, Citizen Member</p>	<p><b>Members of the Public Present:</b></p> <p>Chairman John Daniel, Town Councilor</p> <p>Michael McCall, Town Manager</p> <p>George Chenier, Citizen</p> <p>Corey Chenier, Citizen</p> <p>Karen Harnois, Finance Director</p> <p>Heather Blakey, DPW Director</p> <p>Adriana Robina, HR Director</p> <p>Andy Pelletier, Health Inspector</p> <p>Peg Dean, CBDG/Economic Develop. Dir.</p> <p>Tom Corbett, ZP Battery DevCO, LLC</p> <p>Julie Pena, Chairwoman Southbridge Retirement Board</p> <p>Wil Conoyer, Southbridge Retirement Board</p> <p>Pamela Leduc, Southbridge Retirement Board</p>
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3. Consider and accept General Government Subcommittee Minutes of April 28, 2022

There was no discussion on the meeting minutes as presented.

**MOTION: Accept the General Government Meeting Minutes of April 28th, 2022 as presented.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Councilor Michael Marketti**

**MOTION PASSES 4-0 Unanimous of All Present**

4. Review the proposed job description for DPW Assistant to the Engineer position and entertain a motion to recommend to the Town Council for approval.

DPW Heather Blakely explained that she and the HR Director took in the sub committee's suggestions from the last meeting and updated the job description for the DPW Assistant to the Engineer position including the title change. This position would serve as oversight for the Road Management plan and other small projects occurring in town to ensure quality and timely completion of projects.

Councilor Michael Marketti stated he is still opposed to the position as in his mind the job description was essentially the same as from last meeting and that the town doesn't need an engineer. He stated he would like to see a Clerk of the Works and feels this is a want and not need for the town.

DPW Heather Blakely explained that most Clerk of the Works are also engineers and that the job description was made broader to consider years of experience with road work as well. She stated she won't rule out experience or an engineer depending on the applicant pool.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the proposed job description for DPW Assistant to the Engineer position**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposed**

5. Review/discuss the addition of DPW Assistant to the Engineer Position to Salary Schedule 1, Grade P/T7 and entertain a motion to recommend to Town Council for approval.

Town Manager Michael McCall explained that this would add the Job description approved by the subcommittee in the previous motion to the Salary Schedule 1, at a P/T7 level.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the addition of DPW Assistant to the Engineer Position to Salary Schedule 1, Grade P/T7**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposed**

6. Review revisions to Schedule 1 to approve 2% increases effective July 1, 2022 and the minimum wage increases effective January 1, 2023, and entertain a motion to recommend to the Town Council for approval.

Town Manager Michael Michael explained that this explanation applied to this and the agenda item immediately after this one. He explained that this is the standard 2% increase for all non union employees and the final state required minimum wage increase, which will raise the state minimum wage from \$13.75 an hour to \$15.00 an hour as of January 1st, 2023.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve revisions to Schedule 1 to approve 2% increases effective July 1, 2022 and the minimum wage increases effective January 1, 2023.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposed**

7. Review revisions to Schedule 5 to approve 2% increases effective July 1, 2022 and the minimum wage increases effective January 1, 2023, and entertain a motion to recommend to the Town Council for approval.

Please refer to discussion on agenda item #6 for discussion on this agenda item.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve revisions to Schedule 5 to approve 2% increases effective July 1, 2022 and the minimum wage increases effective January 1, 2023**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposed**

8. Review/discuss the addition of CDBG/Economic Development Coordinator to Salary Schedule 1, MS-19 and recommend to the Town Council for approval.

CDBG/Economic Development Coordinator Peg Dean explained that this position was already approved at a prior Town Council Meeting and that this agenda item would just add the job and its salary scale to the Town Salary Schedule 1 at the MS-19 Level.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the addition of CDBG/Economic Development Coordinator to Salary Schedule 1, MS-19**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 4-0 Unanimous of All Present**

9. Discuss the Southbridge Retirement Board's recommendation to increase the Retirees' COLA base pay from \$12,000.00 to \$14,000.00 effective July 1, 2022 and recommend to the Town Council for approval.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the Southbridge Retirement Board's recommendation to increase the Retirees' COLA base pay from \$12,000.00 to \$14,000.00 effective July 1, 2022.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

Town Manager Michael McCall explained that under the law and current local regulation a maximum 3% cola can be calculated based solely on the first \$12,000 of a pension of a former Town of Southbridge employee, so annually no matter how inflation increases the amount added to the pension annually is capped at \$360. The current state law, he went on to explain, that the local community could increase the cap for that COLA calculation up to a maximum of \$18,000 but that he has seen communities around us in between the \$14,000-\$16,000 cap. He also stated that while inflation increase for Social Security was set this year for 7.2 , and that this put our retirees at a severe disadvantage compared to those collecting Social Security. .

Julie Pena, Chairwoman of the Southbridge Retirement board explained that this would give each of our retirees an additional \$60 a year to help deal with the increased inflation and increased medical costs. At very little long term risk to the town. Wil Conoyer, Southbridge Retirement Board, also stated that Webster just near unanimously approved moving their cap for the COLA increase from \$12,000 to \$16,000. He stated this was important because Webster in many ways is similar to the town of Southbridge economically.

Councilor Gus Steeves stated that he thought that increase was too low considering the rapid inflation and the particular risk of Fixed income persons and families in economic times such as this. He suggested raising the COLA cap for Southbridge retiree pensions to \$16,000 which could give our current retirees an increase of \$120 annually instead of \$60 annually. He went on to state that the cost to the town was low but that this the least the town could do to support our retirees in the tough economic environment.

Councilor Michael Marketti stated he supported raising the cap to \$14,000 but would not support raising it to \$16,000 as he thought the costs would be too high to the town when the town should be controlling costs. He understands the concerns of those on fixed incomes as he is on a fixed income but that he needs to balance that need with the fiscal health of the town.

Chairwoman Jacquelyn Ryan agreed with Councilor Gus Steeves and stated that \$120 increase could cover the cost of a couple prescriptions, a copay with a doctor or specialist, cover the increases to general expenses and that this higher COLA cap would be more helpful at neutralizing the increased costs faced by our Retirees.

Julie Pena, Southbridge Retirement Board, stated that she and many on the board originally wanted to request a \$16,000 COLA cap but that the board was trying to be sensitive to the Town Needs. However, she went on to state that this increase from the original request is very much needed and considered by the board.

Pam Leduc, Southbridge Retirement Board, explained that they would take this request back to the Retirement Board for approval before the Town Council meeting, and she thanked the Subcommittee for considering supporting the cap further to support our retirees.

Wil Conoyer, Southbridge Retirement Board, also thanked the subcommittee and stated that he appreciates the Town's willingness to step up and support their retirees during these tough economic times.

**AMENDMENT MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the Southbridge Retirement Board's recommendation to increase the Retirees' COLA base pay from \$12,000.00 to \$16,000.00 effective July 1, 2022.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Councilor Jacquelyn Ryan**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Marketti Opposed**

10. Review/discuss an access easement on Parcel 27-1-1 and Parcel 40-1-1 owned by the Town of Southbridge in order to get a water source to 225 Dresser Hill Road and entertain a motion to recommend to the Town Council for approval.

Town Manager Michael McCall explained that Tom Corbett, of ZP Battery had contacted himself and General Government Chairwoman Jacquelyn Ryan requesting to be put on the General Government Meeting agenda to get an access easement on some town property due to a water source requirement by the Southbridge Fire Department.

Tom Corbett, of ZP Battery explained that his plan for 225 Dresser Hill Rd has already been approved by the planning board and that this request originated out of a Southbridge Fire Department permit requirement for a water source due to fire risk. In order to meet this requirement he needs to have a dry pipe installed on town property that connects his property to the water system. He stated this pipe would not have water in it most of the

time, only during times of emergency due to the risk of contamination if the pipe was connected at all times. Mr. Corbett also explained that the property is going to be used to store power collected by solar panels into batteries so that the electricity can be used later.

Councilor Michael Marketti asked why this was being brought up at a general government meeting as he felt that this was a DPW matter.

Chairwoman Jacquelyn Ryan explained that there were a number of reasons this belonged on the General Government agenda. The applicant contacted Chairwoman Ryan directly and she forwarded the request to the manager and requested it be posted on her next General Government meeting agenda. She also stated that precedent shows Easements come to the General Government subcommittee since it deals with town property and not the DPW department directly. The DPW is working with the applicant but the Applicant needs the town's permission for land, and that in her mind is the General Government's realm. She also expressed frustration with the last minute logistical question on this front. She stated that this meeting and agenda were properly posted for a week and requested that fellow councilors contact her if they think an item on her subcommittee's agenda should be taken up at their subcommittee's meeting instead of hers.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve an access easement on Parcel 27-1-1 and Parcel 40-1-1 owned by the Town of Southbridge in order to get a water source to 225 Dresser Hill Road.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 4-0 Unanimous of All Present**

11. Discussion of amendments to Southbridge Code of By-Laws introducing new article 9-203: Wetland Protection and Conservation. Entertain a motion to vote to recommend that Council accept this By-Law for three readings.

Councilor Steeves argued that this particular item did not rise to the level of necessity to precipitate it being added to the agenda within the 48 hours before the meeting is scheduled to be set and argued this could be discussed at a future meeting. And recommended postponing action to give the committee members and public time to know this discussion is being brought back up.

**MOTION: Postpone action on this item, due to the last minute addition of this to the agenda.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Councilor Jacquelyn Ryan**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposing**

12. Review the proposed job description for Administrative Assistant I/Inspector (S-10) and recommend acceptance to the Town Council for approval.

Health Director Andy Pelletier explained this job description and following salary schedule addition should be implemented as the current employee in the health department is still doing this work and will continue to work on landfill closing work for the next 3-5 years after closure and end of the contract and is already doing this work and paid by the town, this would formalize the employment properly.

Councilor Marketti was opposed as he felt this was a step towards making this temporary employee a permanent employee of the Health Department and that he thinks this position should not continue because the Landfill is no longer operating.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the proposed job description for Administrative Assistant I/Inspector (S-10)**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposed**

13. Review/discuss the addition of Administrative Assistant I/Inspector to Salary Schedule 1, S-10 and recommend to the Town Council for approval.

Town Manager Michael McCall explained that this would add the Job description approved by the subcommittee in the previous motion to the Salary Schedule 1, at a S-10 level.

**MOTION: Recommend that the Town Council approve the addition of Administrative Assistant I/Inspector to Salary Schedule 1, S-10.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Citizen Member Martena Shea**

**MOTION PASSES 3-1 with Councilor Michael Marketti Opposed**

14. Adjourn

**MOTION: To Adjourn the General Government Subcommittee Meeting.**

**MOTION MADE BY: Councilor Gus Steeves**

**SECONDED BY: Councilor Michael Marketti**

**MOTION PASSES 4-0 Unanimous of All Present**

Meeting was Adjourned at 8:35 PM