



**MINUTES
of the
JOINT
GENERAL GOVERNMENT SUBCOMMITTEE
&
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
TOWN OF SOUTHBRIDGE
May 31, 2023, 2023
6:00pm**

CALL TO ORDER The Joint meeting of the Southbridge General Government Subcommittee and Town Council met on May 31, 2023, at Southbridge Town Hall. Chair Steeves called the meeting to order at 7:12pm.

Roll Call: 4 voting members were present.

Members	Present	Others Present	
Gus Steeves, Chair, Council Member	Yes	John Daniel, Chair, Town Council	Yes
Denise Clemence, Citizen Member	Excused	Michael Marketti, Council Member	Yes
Martena Shea, Citizen Member	Yes	David Adams, Council Member	Yes
Jasmin Rivas, Council Member	Yes	Scott Lazo, Council Member	Yes
Jacquelyn Ryan, Council Member	Yes	Michael Montigny, Council Member	Yes
		Charles Diaz, Cable Access Manager	Yes
		Kristine Russell, Town Accountant	Yes

Vote to approve Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2023:

Motion: Councilor Rivas moved, and Ms. Shea seconded to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2023 General Government Subcommittee meeting. The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.

May 4, 2023:

Motion: Ms. Shea moved, and Councilor Rivas seconded to approve the minutes of the May 4, 2023 General Government Subcommittee meeting. The motion passed 3-0-1 by a show of hands vote with Councilor Rivas abstaining.

Discuss/review the Town Manager's recommendation to reappoint Evelyn Rivera as Municipal Hearing Officer for a one-year term effective July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024, state ethics in good standing. Entertain a motion to Town Council to recommend approval. Ms. Shea moved to vote this item, and Councilor Rivas seconded. The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.

Discuss/review a Cable Department transfer request for \$5,880.00 from #001159-558000 Misc. Materials to #001159-576100 Other Legal to cover law service invoices. Entertain a motion to Town Council to recommend approval. Councilor Ryan moved to vote this item, and Ms. Shea seconded.

Mr. Diaz explained the reason for this transfer and the status and the status of the contract with Charter.

The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.

32 **Discuss/review a Human Resources transfer request for \$9,600.00 from #001132-578100 Town Council**
33 **Reserve to #001152-534600 Recruitment to cover recruitment expenses including pre-employment**
34 **physicals and job ads. Entertain a motion to Town Council to recommend approval. Ms. Shea moved to**
35 **vote this item, and Councilor Rivas seconded.**

36 Ms. Russell explained that this request is to cover unexpected recruiting costs and added that this request
37 should cover the rest of the fiscal year.

38 Councilor Marketti asked for details of which positions were recruited, and Ms. Russell suggested he speak to
39 Ms. Robiana for these details.

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

41 **Discuss/review a transfer request for \$5,000.00 from #001132-578100 Town Council Reserve to**
42 **#01900000-530000 Spec Services Audit to cover additional charges incurred due to compliance testing**
43 **for 6 major federal grant programs for the FY22 Single audit, instead of the normal 3-4 as originally**
44 **budgeted and planned for. Entertain a motion to Town Council to recommend approval. Councilor Ryan**
45 **moved, and Councilor Rivas seconded to vote this item.**

46 Ms. Russell explained that these charges were originally estimated, but because of ARPA audits the costs
47 increased. She then explained why there were more audits.

48 Councilor Adams shared the current status of the ARPA funds but pointed out that there are funds in the
49 Council Reserve that could cover this cost if necessary.

50 Councilor Marketti asked for details of the audits, which was discussed, along with ARPA requirements.

51 There was a discussion of these topics.

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

53 **Discuss/review State flag and Seal Resolution and take any action thereof.**

54 Councilor Rivas reviewed the history of this issue.

55 Councilor Steeves asked if there was recommended language for this change. David Detmold said he had
56 previously provided language but would send it again.

57 Mr. Detmold explained the status and history of the effort to change the State Seal upon which the State Flag
58 is based. He explained that the Special Commission created by Governor Baker voted that the seal and flag
59 should be totally revised. He mentioned some items in the seal that are offensive to indigenous people in the
60 Commonwealth. He said that 75 cities and towns have voted to support changing the seal with only 6 rejecting
61 the change. He explained that there is no cost to the Town and explained some of the benefits of supporting
62 the change. Finally, he reviewed the steps that would be followed to make this change happen.

63 Councilor Ryan expressed enthusiastic support for the resolution. Because the resolution was not included in
64 the packet, she recommended this item be postponed to the next General Government meeting.

65 There was a discussion of how to proceed.

66 Ms. Shea asked how the ultimate change would happen, and Mr. Detmold explained how this has happened in
67 other States although he does not know exactly how it will happen in Massachusetts. He added that the
68 Legislature must make the change, but the process is not clear.

69 Mr. Detmold explained that a public input session was held earlier in the year which was covered by the press
70 and 500 flyers were handed out in Southbridge.

71 There was a discussion about the views and involvement of indigenous communities in the process.

72 George Chenier explained that he has no memory of being taught about this symbol and feels that most youth
73 still do not understand it. He shared his understanding of the symbol and immigrant background. He said he
74 feels residents should make this choice and that the Council should get resident input before voting.

75 There was a conversation about the communities that rejected the resolution, and what types of objections
76 were raised by residents of those communities.

77 Maureen Doyle asked what a new flag might look like. Mr. Detmold said the Commission will determine this
78 and shared some ideas that have been suggested.

79 Councilor Lazo said he thinks these images reflect history and worried about what would happen if these are
80 erased. He shared his concerns about getting input from residents and asked that the pros and cons of both
81 actions be considered.

82 Mr. Detmold explained that there is a bill to introduce the history of Native Americans in the 3rd grade
83 curriculum. He pointed out that Native Americans live and work in the current time and no longer wear
84 buckskins as depicted in the seal. He said removing the symbol does not erase the history but doing so might
85 help community members to be more involved in the schools and community life.

86 Councilor Ryan said history should be maintained, but putting this on the flag gives it reverence. There was a
87 discussion of teaching Native American history in the schools.

88 *Councilor Ryan moved to postpone this discussion to the June 7, 2023 meeting of the General*
89 *Government Subcommittee pending the inclusion of the resolution in the packet. Ms. Shea seconded. The*
90 *motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.*

91 **Discuss/review Old Town Policies and take any action thereof.**

92 The subcommittee discussed the materials they have and whether or not this has already passed the Town
93 Council. The subcommittee decided they require more information from staff before moving forward.

94 *Councilor Ryan moved to postpone this discussion to the June 7, 2023 meeting of the General*
95 *Government Subcommittee ensuring that the Chair follows up to have it separated into two agenda items.*
96 *Councilor Rivas seconded. The motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.*

97 **6. NEXT MEETING:** June 7, 2023

98 **ADJOURNMENT**

99 **Motion:** *Councilor Ryan moved to adjourn the meeting of the Southbridge General Government*
100 *Subcommittee. Ms. Shea seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by a show of hands vote.*
101 *The meeting was adjourned at 8:02pm.*

102 Respectfully submitted by,
103 Susan Peghiny, Recording Clerk