

# *Town of Sturbridge*

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Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Administrator  
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## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of Selectmen  
FR: Shaun A. Suhoski, Town Administrator  
DT: September 30, 2011  
RE: Town Administrator's Report for October 3 Meeting

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Following please find my report and recommendations for your October 3 meeting. It is a very busy time.

### GENERAL ITEMS:

#### **Discussion with Tom Cohan, Charter Communications**

Mr. Cohan will attend Monday's meeting at the Board's request to discuss Charter's operations in the community.

#### **Special Town Meeting Warrant: November 7, 2011 @ 7PM**

Request the Board of Selectmen vote to place and make recommendations on the proposed articles included in the attached Warrant (proposed warrant to be emailed on Saturday). The articles proposed for consideration will include:

- Article 97 (active recreation) conversion for Shepard Parcel
- Appropriation of \$131,000 from Ambulance Stabilization Account for purchase of new ambulance
- Adoption of Stretch Code (energy efficiency)
- Amendment (corrections) to Design Review General Bylaw
- Article to move Annual Town Meeting to first Saturday in May
- Article to amend General Bylaw timing requirements for Town Meeting
- Citizen Petition regarding Saturday Town Meetings
- Charter Revision Articles (Note: in the absence of modified language or recommendation from the joint meetings of FinCom and the CRC I will put forward the language that your Board "placed")

## TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

1. Part-time Clerk Appointment to Local Access Dept.: The Board-approved budget for the Cable Advisory Committee and Local Access television includes provision of a part-time clerk for up to 10 hours per week.

Interviews with two finalists were recently conducted by the Production Coordinator, the CAC's Vice Chairman and Town Administrator and all three recommended that Mr. Stephen Sandberg, of Worcester, be appointed to the post. On September 20, the candidate was presented to and met with the Cable Advisory Committee which voted four in favor, one abstained (Town Administrator) to recommend to the Board of Selectmen that the candidate be appointed to the position.

Mr. Sandberg has 23 years of experience in production including operating a full-service video production studio and managing day-to-day operations of a production company. He also possesses working knowledge of various editing software and an aptitude for technology that impressed the committee.

***Recommendation: That the Board of Selectmen ratify the Town Administrator's appointment of Stephen Sandberg, of Worcester, to the position of part-time clerk in the Local Access Dept. effective October 3, 2011 at a starting rate of \$14.13 per hour (Grade 2, Step 3) and subject to a successful CORI check and standard six-month probationary period.***

2. Solar Power Purchase Agreement and Potential Landfill Lease: In the spring of 2011, I initiated the Town's participation with Muni-Sun LLC in an eight-town consortium seeking to develop solar power facilities on municipal lands. The office of the Inspector General later issued an advisory opinion that the procurement process might be called into question and the group procurement was halted.

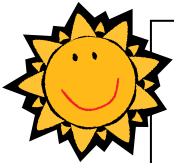
After the rush of activity in June and July, I initiated a new procurement amended from the initial public-domain procurement documents into a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) format to be evaluated under MGL c. 25I. Responses were received on September 19.

On September 29, a quorum of the Energy Advisory Committee met with me to initiate the review and ranking of responses to the Request for Qualifications relative to selecting a preferred solar developer. The Town would then negotiate terms of a Solar Power Purchase Agreement and potential land lease at the landfill. (You may recall that the June 6, 2011 Annual Town Meeting gave authority for the BOS to lease the land for this purpose).

There are seven responses, each of which has been hard copied for the information of each member of the Board. Note that there can be some items in an RFQ response that are not public record, so, if you have a question please address that to me.

In order to move this forward expeditiously, I am requesting that your Board endorse the following process:

- **No later than October 20:** the EAC completes its review and ranks the top three responses together with the single preferred and recommended candidate
- **On or about October 24:** the BOS formally reviews the EAC's recommendation and rationale and formally designates the top candidate to initiate negotiations (remember, in the end, your Board must approve any proposed contract or project)
- **On or about October 24:** when the top candidate is named, that the BOS also formally designate one of its members to work with the Town Administrator, EAC, Town Counsel and/or a consultant experienced in the subject matter to negotiate and frame the project and contract for later consideration by the BOS
- **November to mid-December:** the BOS reviews the project and contract to finalize details and discusses the project in public forum once agreement reached.



The above schedule is intentionally aggressive, but, is feasible. If the Town is successful in its negotiations I remain hopeful of two favorable outcomes:

1. **A reduced and negotiated-price for all municipal electricity costs for at least 20 years with an option for an additional 10 years, and**
2. **A dramatic and measurable reduction in the Town's carbon footprint.**

***Recommendation: That the Board of Selectmen approve the above-described process and timeline for review of the Solar Power RFQ.***

NOTE: The Energy Advisory Committee recently received a notice of resignation from Thomas Adams. There are currently two vacancies on this committee which the Town will advertise.

3. Economic Development Committee Revised Mission Statement: At prior Board meetings, it has been suggested that the EDC be re-purposed with a new mission statement. I firmly believe this is needed as the prior purpose is outdated.

Attached in your packets is a proposed EDC Mission Statement and Initial Workplan. I am requesting the Board's approval of this document Monday night as the starting point

for the new EDC. The document is similar to the existing-but-outdated mission adopted by a previous board of selectmen but does include updated reference to the 2011 Master Plan and a recommended change in composition. This document can always be modified by your Board after the reconstituted EDC has the opportunity to reconvene and find its rhythm.

The composition of the EDC is suggested with the following improvements: (1) remove limiting factors on the membership's composition, (2) add the Board of Selectmen's ratification requirement, and (3) insert a five-year versus "indefinite" term limit. I do not believe automatically indefinite terms are in the best interest of any appointed committee.

***Recommendation: That the Board of Selectmen ratify the Economic Development Committee Mission Statement and Initial Workplan dated October 3, 2011.***

4. Economic Development Committee Appointments: (NOTE: some of following is contingent upon approval of the mission document in item #2 as a starting point.)

If the 2011 Mission Statement and Initial Workplan is approved, I would propose ascribing the five year term limits to the two existing members as follows (simply reverse order of original appointment date):

| <u>Name</u>      | <u>Term Expires</u> |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Kevin MacConnell | 2012                |
| Donald Miller    | 2013                |
| (New Appointee)  | 2014                |
| (New Appointee)  | 2015                |
| (New Appointee)  | 2016                |

As I have reported to your Board, four of seven persons that had previously expressed interest in participating on a re-purposed Economic Development Committee accepted interviews. All were worthy candidates and were enthusiastic concerning the potential for economic growth in the Town.

In reviewing the credentials submitted, and through personal discussion, I propose to appoint the following individuals – representing varied backgrounds – to the Economic Development Committee for five year terms as follows:

***Heather Hendrick:*** Ms. Hendrick is a graduate of Colgate University and rose to the position of senior underwriting manager in the insurance industry where she oversaw 14 underwriters and interfaced with company executives. She left the business world about four years ago upon the birth of her first child and became active in the Sturbridge MOMS club, currently serving as president. She served on the Master Plan Steering

Committee and is interested in its implementation. She hopes to increase prosperity through lowering of vacancy rates and exploring new ideas.

**David Holland:** Mr. Holland has over 40 years of experience in sales of business and office equipment including serving as VP of Sales & Marketing for a major vendor where he directed a national sales force of 30 sales and support representatives generating up to \$154M in revenue. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, Mr. Holland is now “semi-retired” and believes that Sturbridge’s good schools and transportation access can be better leveraged.

**Sherri Pelski:** Ms. Pelski brings 18 years of experience in the financial services industry including asset management, hedge fund and mutual fund sectors. She served six years as the Chief Financial and Operating Officer for a firm managing \$750M with 22 employees and is now engaged in a new enterprise. She graduated with honors from Bentley College and earned a MBA from Boston University, also with honors. She participated in the Master Plan process and has the financial acumen and energy to help guide the economic development agenda.

**Recommendation:** *That the Board of Selectmen ratify the Town Administrator’s appointments of Heather Hendrick, David Holland and Sherri Pelski to the Economic Development Committee, and, to revise the term limit of all members from “indefinite” to five year terms with the following initial expiration dates:*

| <u>Name</u>             | <u>Term Expires</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Kevin MacConnell</i> | <i>2012</i>         |
| <i>Donald Miller</i>    | <i>2013</i>         |
| <i>Heather Hendrick</i> | <i>2014</i>         |
| <i>David Holland</i>    | <i>2015</i>         |
| <i>Sherri Pelski</i>    | <i>2016</i>         |

**5. Senior Municipal Service Program Appointment:** An additional applicant, Rita Choquet of Roy Rd. in Fiskdale, has taken advantage of the revised program guidelines and is qualified to participate in the FY12 program. The Assessor’s office can also use the help.

**Recommendation:** *That the Board of Selectmen approve the participation of the above-named applicant in the FY12 Senior Municipal Service Program to be assigned to the Assessor’s office.*

**6. Community Development Advisory Committee Appointments:** The Board has approved a seven-member CDAC to assist with development of the Community Development Strategy document and public outreach and review of a proposed Community Development Block Grant application to assist with needed wastewater

improvements and housing code improvements in the Sturbridge Retirement Community. The following seats are now ready to be filled:

| <u>Name</u>    | <u>Representing</u>                  |
|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| Heather Hart   | Master Plan Implementation Committee |
| Ginger Peabody | Planning Board                       |
| James Cunniff  | Planning Board                       |
| (vacant)       | Board of Selectmen                   |
| (vacant)       | Board of Selectmen                   |
| (vacant)       | Resident of Target Area              |
| (vacant)       | Resident of Target Area              |

As of the close of applications from residents, I had received four recommended names from the SRC Board of Directors, one direct application from an SRC resident and one additional application from a resident outside of the target area. I am making arrangements to speak briefly with the resident applicants (by telephone) next week so that two may be appointed to the voting seats. All residents can attend any meetings held as these are public meetings.

Please feel free to add your Board's designees on Monday night. I fully expect to have two resident appointments before you on October 11.

***Recommendation: That the Board of Selectmen appoint the following persons to the ad-hoc Community Development Advisory Committee:***

| <u>Name</u>                  | <u>Representing</u>                                |
|------------------------------|--|
| <b><i>Heather Hart</i></b>   | <b><i>Master Plan Implementation Committee</i></b> |
| <b><i>Ginger Peabody</i></b> | <b><i>Planning Board</i></b>                       |
| <b><i>James Cunniff</i></b>  | <b><i>Planning Board</i></b>                       |

**7. Cultural Council Appointment:** Due to the state mandated term limit (two consecutive three-year terms) Wynn Duvernay can no longer serve on the Cultural Council. In response to advertising the vacancy, Dale Gonyea applied and spent some time speaking with me last week. Mr. Gonyea is a long-time resident of Sturbridge and has been active in promoting and performing arts in Southbridge as well as the music ministry in his church. He is very interested in giving time back to his hometown and I believe he will be a good fit for the council.

***Recommendation: That the Board of Selectmen approve the Town Administrator's appointment of Dale Gonyea to the Sturbridge Cultural Council for a three-year term expiring in 2014.***

8. Miscellaneous Items: Following are some concise updates on other matters that are pending. You will see it remains extremely busy:

- **Tropical Storm Irene – FEMA Reimbursement:** MEMA confirmed receipt of the Town’s application for FEMA reimbursement for Category B costs associated with the emergency preparations and response to TS Irene. I am still awaiting the overtime costs from two departments to complete this process. Also, FEMA was expected to have a “kick-off” briefing last week, however, this has not yet occurred. Although Town costs appear much less substantial (likely under \$30,000 total) than the tornado, the DPW Overtime account is under stress and we will vigorously pursue all potential reimbursement of disaster response costs.
- **FEMA Tornado Reimbursement:** Awaiting state action on grant agreement. The Town and FEMA have submitted the “Category B” Emergency Actions request. The Town's gross submittal for fire, police and public works (including emergency contracted debris removal) was \$135,930.45 with an anticipated FEMA contribution of \$101,947.83. Also, on September 29, Town staff met with FEMA and the monitoring vendor to outline additional costs proposed for reimbursement including: (1) debris piles staged on Route 20 and Route 15, (2) the Town Barn fields and access road, (3) Stallion Hill conservation land, (4) the Trolley Line Trail, and (5) miscellaneous root balls throughout impact zone. FEMA visited portions of items #2, #3 and #4 and the Town’s consultant, DPW Director and Tree Warden will identify problematic root balls in item #5 during the coming week. FEMA will return on October 3 to further discuss removal options for the staging areas in item #1.
- **Riverlands Environmental Monitoring:** At my request, Tighe & Bond has contacted additional drilling companies and riggers in hopes of finding suitable access to the site prior to winter. T&B is also exploring whether a geo-probe versus conventional auger drilling may save time and help make up for likely added expenses to access the site. T&B brought two additional drillers to the site over the past week and revised approaches and cost estimates are expected in the coming week. Due to the difficult access, costs will likely be revised upward.
- **Walker Road Drainage:** CME has submitted a formal design and engineering proposal for Walker Road. A copy will be distributed to your mailboxes. The DPW Director and I will seek to provide this information to all residents along Walker Road in the coming 10 days so that they can be prepared to offer feedback to the Board. Initial indications are a construction budget of \$600,000 to \$750,000 with the engineering proposal coming in at \$49,273.00. I would propose deferring the formal discussion on this item until after we brief the residents.
- **Personnel Committee:** Revised Tree Warden job description per additional comments from incumbent and document proposed for approval and grading at a re-scheduled October 5 meeting (due to Master Plan dinner).

- **MIIA Insurance Matters:** Based upon recent meeting with chief claims adjuster from MIIA the Town's proposed tornado insurance claim was modified. The Town Accountant is expected to submit this claim next week. Once MIIA determines coverage (most items are) the Town will get reimbursed. I will provide your Board with the actual claim and response. Those items not covered under MIIA will be added to the FEMA reimbursement request.
- **AAB Variance Update:** Today the Town received the official approved variance request for the Center Office Building. A copy will be distributed to your mailboxes by Judy on Monday. This variance was approved as requested without any conditions. The Board may recall that the AAB did require installation of a new handrail at the Town Hall. The Architect's revised sketch and specifications, together with the required prevailing wage rates, have been compiled and the Town will seek three quotes for the work next week.
- **Town Hall and COB Building Project Update:** An update meeting with the Architect, Project Manager, town staff and a member of the building committee with direct HVAC engineering knowledge was held on September 26. The group discussed the poor performance of the HVAC system at the COB. In response to numerous written complaints filed by the Town Administrator, the general contractor (Forish Construction) has determined to undertake diagnostic and remedial action through another HVAC vendor (CAM HVAC) with all costs being backcharged to the original filed sub-bidder. The group also discussed several warranty issues including peeling paint and some apparent cracks on the columns, cracks in plaster in some offices and other more modest items. A written itemization is being developed for the general contractor's response.
- **Meeting Participation:** Attended Land Use Division meeting concerning the need for a more uniform policy on private road matters (to come to BOS in next few weeks); met with MIIA insurance representative relative to coverages; participated in the Local Emergency Planning Committee meeting; sat in on Recreational Trails Master Plan meeting; met with Town Planner, ZBA Chairman and Town Counsel regarding upcoming hearing; initiated meeting and discussion with School Superintendent, IT Manager and other Town staff regarding shared IT services; and attended Commercial Tourist District walk-through along with Selectmen Gimas and Blanchard.