

**TOWN OF STOCKBRIDGE, MA.
50 MAIN STREET
FINANCE COMMITTEE VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 24, 2022 AT 6 PM**

- 1. CHAIR BIKOFSKY CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 6 PM.**
- 2. COMMITTEE ATTENDEES: JAY BIKOFSKY, JIM BALFANZ, PAM BOUDREAU, DIANE REUSS, ED LANE, JORJA MARSDEN, STEVE SHATZ AND BILL VOGT**

TOWN ATTENDEES: MICHAEL CANALES

OTHER ATTENDEES; CLARENCE FANTO

- 3. CHAIR BIKOFSKY EXPRESSED THE COMMITTEE'S SINCERE SYMPATHIES AND REGRETS TO DIANE REUSS OVER THE RECENT PASSING OF HER HUSBAND VERN. THE CHAIR AND STEVE SHATZ THEN REMINDED THE COMMITTEE OF IT'S ADVISORY NON- POLICY MAKING ROLE TO THE TOWN.**
- 4. THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF MAY 5 AND MAY 9, 2022 WERE PRESENTED AND A MOTION FOR APPROVAL WAS MADE BY JIM BALFANZ AND SECONDED BY STEVE SHATZ. A VOTE WAS CALLED AND THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED 6-0 WITH JORJA MARSDEN ABSTAINING FOR NOT BEING IN ATTENDANCE AT THESE MEETINGS.**
- 5. RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS:
MICHAEL CANALES REVIEWED A SERIES OF YEAR END RESERVE FUND TRANSFERS FOR THE COMMITTEE TOTALING \$148,045.51. MAJOR ITEMS INCLUDED MEETING AND JOB POSTING ADVERTISING, WATER TESTING, COMPUTER TECHNICIAN TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND SERVICES, HIGHWAY EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS, SNOW AND ICE EXPENSES, RETIREMENT FUNDING, WATER DEPARTMENT SUPPLIES, PROJECTS AND ASSESSMENTS AND SEWER DEPARTMENT SUPPLIES, EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS AS WELL AS TELEPHONE COMMUNICATIONS.
A MOTION WAS MADE BY STEVE SHATZ AND SECONDED BY JIM BALFANZ. A VOTE WAS CALLED AND THESE TRANSFERS WERE APPROVED 7-0 BY THE COMMITTEE SUBJECT TO SELECT BOARD APPROVAL.**

MICHAEL CANALES THEN REVIEWED A SERIES OF INTER DEPARTMENTAL TRANSFERS. INCLUDED WERE A HEALTH INSURANCE EXCESS BALANCE TO HIGHWAY VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE/REPAIR, WATER DEPARTMENT OVERTIME TO WATER DEPARTMENT MOWING, WATER TESTING, PIPELINE REPLACEMENT AND WATER CHEMICALS, TOWN OFFICES PURCHASED EQUIPMENT AND SEWER DEPARTMENT OVERTIME TO REPAIRS AND MAIN EQUIPMENT.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY STEVE SHATZ AND SECONDED BY JAY BIKOFSKY. A VOTE WAS CALLED AND THESE INTRADEPARTMENTAL TRANSFERS WERE APPROVED 7-0 SUBJECT TO SELECT BOARD APPROVAL.

6. REVIEW OF CONCERNS RELATED TO RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION LEGISLATION: CHAIR BIKOFSKY AND STEVE SHATZ REVIEWED A NUMBER OF CONCERNS AS RESPECTS CONSIDERATION BY THE TOWN OF ENACTING RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE TAX EXEMPTION LEGISLATION UNDER CHAPTER 59 SECTION C OF THE MA. GENERAL LAWS. INCLUDED WERE THE FOLLOWING:
- THE LEGISLATIVE INTENT WAS TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE/RELIEF TO THOSE OF LIMITED MEANS WHOSE HOME EQUITY WAS INACCESSABLE.
 - TO DATE ONLY 16 OF 351 MA. COMMUNITIES HAVE ADOPTED SUCH LEGISLATION.
 - THE STATUTE DOES NOT REQUIRE THAT ANY FINDINGS BE MADE PUBLIC AS TO THE SUCCESS OF IMPLEMENTING THIS LEGISLATION.
 - HOUSING CHALLENGES WHICH THE CITIES AND TOWNS PRESENTLY FACE WILL NOT BE SOLVED BY SHIFTING THE TAX BURDEN TO PART TIME RESIDENTS WHO OWN HOMES WITH HIGHER VALUATIONS.
 - STOCKBRIDGE RESIDENTS CURRENTLY HAVE TWO PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE HOUSING ASSISTANCE; THE "OLD AGE EXEMPTION" AND THE REAL ESTATE TAX DEFERMENT PROGRAM.
 - THE RESIDENTIAL TAX EXEMPTION PROGRAM IS AN UNDOCUMENTED AND NON-QUANTIFIED "BAND AID."
 - MA. DOR REPRESENTATIVES FELT THAT PASSING THIS LEGISLATION WAS A "FEEL GOOD" RESPONSE TO HOME EQUITY ACCESS AND DID NOT SPECIFY THE DETAILS OF THE RECIPIENTS, A SOLUTION IN SEARCH OF A PROBLEM.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS FELT THAT IMPLEMENTING SUCH A PROGRAM WOULD BE CONSIDERED DIVISIVE AS IT DID NOT REQUIRE MEANS TESTING OR SPECIFY A REQUIRED BASIS FOR NEED. JIM BOLFANZ, ED LANE, JORJA MARSDEN AND DIANE REUSS SUGGESTED AN INDEPTH AND COMPREHENSIVE STUDY OF THE ALTERNATIVES BEFORE ANY FURTHER ACTION IS CONTEMPLATED. ALTERNATIVES MENTIONED INCLUDED:

- RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE PROPERTY TAX DEFERRAL
- MA.MODEL MEANS TESTED RESIDENTIAL EXEMPTION LEGISLATION
- ELDERLY STATUTORY PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION
- ELDERLY WORK PROGRAMS FOR RESIDENTS 60 AND OLDER
- VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION FUND FOR SENIORS AND DISABLED RESIDENTS 60 AND OLDER
- REAL ESTATE TAX CREDIT FOR LEGALLY BLIND RESIDENTS
- WIDOWS PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION
- VETERANS PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTION

PAGE 3: FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF AUGUST 24, 2022 CON'T.

JIM BALFANZ REVIEWED THE TOWN'S BUDGETS FROM 2014-2023 RANGING FROM \$10,461,950-\$13,181,080 AS WELL AS THE NEW BUILDING PERMITS FROM 2012-2021 AVERAGING 5 PER YEAR WITH A TOTAL OF 50. HE STRESSED THAT APPROVAL OF PROJECTS SUCH AS ELM COURT AND OTHERS, WOULD CREATE OVERALL TOWN TAX REVENUE THAT COULD BE ACHIEVED WITH "REASONABLE GROWTH."

IT WAS ALSO NOTED THAT VIRTUAL/REMOTE PUBLIC COMMENT FAVORED A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE MECHANISM, SUBSEQUENTLY TO BE DECIDED UPON, TO OFFER PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE TO THOSE IN NEED.

GENE FIDELL THANKED THE FINANCE COMMITTEE FOR THEIR EFFORTS TO DATE ON THIS MATTER.

7. THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 7:05 PM.