

TOWN OF STERLING  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
September 12, 2012

MEETING:

Chairman Sushchuk called the meeting to order at 6:31pm. Roll call established that Selectmen Paul Sushchuk, Ron Furmaniuk and Brian Patacchiola were all present.

**VOTE:** Selectman Paul Sushchuk made a motion enter Executive Session regarding Collective bargaining. Roll Call Vote. Chairman Sushchuk – Aye. Selectman Furmaniuk – Aye. Selectman Patacchiola – Aye. The public was asked to leave the room.

The public meeting resumed at 7:02.

Chairman Sushchuk declared that the Sterling Lancaster Television as the only official electronic copy of the meeting.

Economic Development:

- Ambassador Program

Jeff Donaldson spoke with the Board about establishing an Ambassador Program. The purpose of this program would be to reach out to existing businesses in Sterling to determine how the Town can better serve their needs. In so doing, the Town will be better able to encourage outside business to establish themselves in Sterling. This will Help the tax base as well as provide jobs.

Susan Millet, Professor at Clark University, was on hand and has offered her students in the capacity as interns. They will work with the Economic Development Committee to develop a survey for area businesses. At the end of their internship, the students will participate in a Capstone project. The Town will define the Capstone project and determine what shall be “delivered” as a result of the project.

It is estimated by Professor Millet that 3 – 7 students will participate in this Ambassador Program as a Spring project. The students will conduct their research/survey and categorize the businesses. The Selectmen will designate a person to whom the students will report. Mr. Donaldson will begin working with Clark University and Professor Millett, with the intention of developing the groundwork for this project by the end of this Fall.

- Industrial Development/Economic Development

Walter Sanders spoke on behalf of the Industrial Development Committee. He reported that the Industrial Development Committee has actively encouraged Industry within the Town of Sterling. Their purview includes rezoning and assistance to Town Industry. Mr. Sanders stated that the Industrial Committee was established by Town Meeting in 1962 and has 5

members. He also stated that he believes that it would be advantageous to appoint a separate committee to concentrate on the Commercial side of the Economic equation.

The consensus of the Select Board was to create a separate Economic Development Committee to address the needs of the commercial and retail businesses and to work with the findings of the Interns from the Ambassador Program.

It was discussed that while the Select Board can appoint members to a temporary Board or Committee, it is in the best interest of the Town to put this committee to a vote at a Town Meeting. Mr. Donaldson has volunteered to draft an article for the Special Town Meeting which will give the Economic Development Committee a solid base and outline the expectations of the Committee.

Lance Harris, from the School Board, reported to the Selectmen:

School Update:

- Superintendent Pandiscio intends to retire on December 15<sup>th</sup>. The School Board has accepted his retirement in lieu of his resignation.
- Currently, Anthony Gasparo is being considered as the interim candidate for the Superintendent's position.
- It is the intention of the School Board to hire a new Business manager before the end of November.
- There has been no resolution in regards to the reinstatement of Principal Morgan from the Chocksett School.

Review Draft List of Special Town Meeting Articles:

The Town Administrator presented the Board with a draft of the articles that have been requested as "place holders" for the Special Town Meeting. Selectman Patacchiola stated that past practice has been to limit Special Town Meeting Articles to those that are urgent or strictly routine. The Board asked the Administrator to recommend which articles fit that criteria. At the next Selectmen's meeting, the Board will then decide which articles are to be included in the November Special Town Meeting.

Solar P.I.L.O.T. for Wiles Rd.

Harald Scheid, Terri Ackerman and Selectman Patacchiola have meet with the Solar Developer to discuss the general rates, the size of the project and the wattage anticipated. Mr. David Krupp represented CES, Com. Energy Solar. He reports that the Town has been co-operative and they plan to put the approval to the voters at the Special Town Meeting. Their goal for completion is by the end of the year.

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Update of the Septic and Roof  
costs for the 1835 Town Hall:

Vern Gaw represented the 1835 Town Hall.

Septic:

- The 1835 Town Hall must tie into the Fire Station septic
- Place Site Construction has preliminarily determined that the nitrogen treatment system is not required because the system will accommodate 260 people, at any one time, without it.
- Two pumps will be required.
- An easement under Waushacum Street is required.
- The estimated cost of an engineer and the installation is \$54,600

Roof:

- There is a problem with the existing roof.
- The sub-structure will not support slate shingles and a snow load.
- It is recommended that the roof first be re-enforced by box steel beams

The Board and Mr. Gaw agreed that the septic project should proceed to the Special Town Meeting. However, since the roof is a large project, it was decided to include the roof repairs as part of the large renovation article for the 1835 Town Hall, at the Annual Town Meeting, in May.

Town Administrator's Update/  
Old Business:

Sterling saved \$134,000.00 on health insurance this year..

The Regional Selectman's Meeting will be held at the Holden Senior Center on October 3<sup>rd</sup>.

A meeting regarding Chocksett Crossing is scheduled at the Police Station from 10:30 – 12:30 on September 25<sup>th</sup>.

The Town Administrator attended a meeting about the Asian Longhorn beetle. They are reportedly existing in West Boylston but there is no evidence of them in Sterling at this time.

Business and Correspondence:

**VOTE:** One day liquor licenses were requested for The Eight Point Sportsman Club for September 15<sup>th</sup>, October 21<sup>st</sup> and October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012. Selectman Furmaniuk made a motion that these requests be approved. Selectman Patacchiola 2<sup>nd</sup>. All in Favor.

The following schedule was approved:

Selectmen's Meetings : October 10, October 24, November 7, December 5<sup>th</sup> and December 19<sup>th</sup>.

A short meeting will also be held prior to the Special Town Meeting, November 7<sup>th</sup>, at the school at 6:00.

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Citizen Letter:

The meeting Adjourned at 8:50 pm

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*Reviewed 9-12-12*

Claire C. Stidsen  
5 Sherwood Drive  
Sterling, MA. 01564  
August 26, 2012

Paul Sushchuk  
Chairman  
Board of Selectmen  
1 Park Street  
Sterling, MA. 01564

Dear Chairman,

Please read this entire letter into your meeting minutes. I am writing to your board to voice my displeasure with the actions of the Superintendent as it applies to his lack of oversight with our district budget and also to disagree with both the comments and request made by our school committee representatives when they attended your past meeting and asked the town to support the efforts of the administration in the coming weeks. The only support you should give is for the immediate firing of the Superintendent and recall of all current school committee members. There is no way that either the Superintendent or any sitting school committee members should be investigating this situation, let alone coming up with a plan to fix it! Has everyone lost all their marbles? These are the same persons who are responsible for the error and now you are asked to support their efforts to fix it? I don't even want to discuss whose fault it is or is not- I really don't care who did or didn't do whatever or how it happened; I just care about how as a Town we go forward financially. This past year town finances members tried to keep town finances stable in this uncertain economy; requesting boards and employees alike keep budget increases at a minimum with your board even helping to establish a neighbor to neighbor program for residents in need. Now because of this huge error taxpayers will probably be asked to give more again to a financially failing school district that uses all their resources, including children, to make taxpayers feel guilty about the administrations inability to manage money. Where will this all end - When will someone have the courage to hold up a red flag and say NO MORE MONEY WITHOUT A DOCUMENTED LINE ITEM BUDGET!!!

Much discussion has and will continue to occur with regard to this situation; however, two facts remain constant; the first being the Superintendent admitted due to his lack of supervision the school budget is in error, meaning Sterling taxpayers will be sharing this 3 million dollar deficit reimbursement with the other district towns at our next annual school budget. Second; the current sitting school committee members have shown no interest in advocating for taxpayers, only for students who don't pay taxes, they have failed to hold the Superintendent responsible for this error by not accepting his resignation and they continue to support the school district administration which ignores the voice of taxpayers while at the same time threatening voters at town meetings with pink slips to teachers' positions if their money requests are not met. These two issues, combined or separate, are unacceptable, cannot be tolerated and should not be excused by our Selectmen.

A budget is not the tool by which you see how much money you can spend and then manipulate unseen funds after you go over budget. It is the tool that DICTATES what you can spend and when you must stop spending! The Superintendent needs to be dismissed immediately and he certainly should not be the one directing how to investigate this situation because he has a real conflict of interest in that arena, as do each of the school committee members currently in place.

*[Faint, illegible text, possibly a signature or additional notes]*

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These persons were hired, paid and/or elected to work on behalf of all member towns taxpayers to administer both the monetary and scholastic needs of the regional school system for our children. They all failed miserably- and to say they have the best of intentions, or that they attend church every Sunday or they take in stray cats as good humanitarians is all well and good, however, as for completing the jobs they were paid or elected to do they failed and they should all be fired. In their place an interim Superintendent should be hired and new persons should be elected as school committee members from all five towns ASAP, with a major requirement being that from each town one member must be either a sitting or past town finance board member to ensure future unity in both the towns and school annual budgets presented by allowing more direct access to development of the district school budget from the towns perspective.

Taxpayers have had enough of this "business as usual" politics where administrations are growing larger and larger, money is becoming less in receivables and accountable to those persons who pay the bills, the taxpayers, is almost non-existent. Taxpayers deserve more consideration of their wishes with regard to supporting the current Superintendent and school committee members and your board needs to put your unanimous vote in favor of the ordinary taxpayers' wishes to dismiss them all and not let your electorate dictate your agenda.

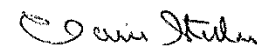
Furthermore, if each year we are going to hear that the State is going to continue to renege on its original commitment to match funds for regionalization, as was promised when regionalization was first promoted to the five towns, and if they continue year after year to choose cutting school funding from their budget making it difficult to balance our district budget, then perhaps it is time to give real thought to dissolving the regional school system, at least in grades K-8, so our town officials and taxpayers can regain control over some of their own money and decide how their town school system should educate their children.

If you research the State Department of Education I would wager to bet our regional district is not the only one in trouble, there are probable many regional school systems experiencing the same flaws, not enough State reimbursement, not enough local funding and inadequate or misappropriated budgets. Supporting or advocating for a regional school system that continuously cries it is operating in the red due to a lack of funding or that resorts to blackmail to get taxpayer money I feel is really not worth the paper the district contract is written on.

Currently the district takes HALF the operating budget for Sterling, next year the numbers will surely increase due to this huge budget error. What services or positions will Sterling be forced to cut in an effort to repay our share of this error? Shall we deplete our reserve funds so the district can stay solvent? Do all five towns have to go bankrupt before someone yells uncle!

Thank you for your anticipated support.

Respectively submitted,



Claire Stidsen

Cc: Board of Selectmen, Community Hall Annex, 246 Main Street, Rutland, MA 01543  
Board of Selectmen, 6 Town Hall Drive, Princeton, MA 01541  
Board of Selectmen, Starbuck Building, 1204 Main Street, Holden, MA 01520  
Board of Selectmen, 697 Pleasant Street, Paxton, MA. 01612