

Stoneham Override Study Committee

Date:	July 22, 2025
Time:	7p
Location:	Stoneham Town Hall Hearing Room
Present:	Joe Joffe – Chair Stephen Ternullo – Vice Chair Nick Stavre, Jackie Mahoney, Heidi Bilbo, Brendan Dowdle, Eric Scruggs, Cory Mashburn
Absent:	
Guests:	Dennis Sheehan – Town Administrator, Kristen Spence – Director of The Council on Aging, Rachel Overbeck – Library Director

	<p><u>AGENDA</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval of Minutes from previous meeting - Vote Required 2. Council on Aging Presentation and discussion 3. Library Presentation and discussion 4. Golf Course Overview 5. Structure of the Report 6. Upcoming meetings and Schedule 7. Upcoming Budget Information Session at Stoneham PD on 7/24/25 8. Other business – Non-Deliberative 9. Adjournment - Vote Required

	<p>Statement from Mr. Ternullo before starting agenda topics</p> <p>Mr. Ternullo read a brief statement to address a question from a Stoneham resident. Mr. Ternullo provided a summary of his history with the town including service with the VFW and veterans committee. Additionally, he noted that his involvement with the group “Keep Stoneham Affordable for All” as its Chair was clearly disclosed in his letter of interest provided to the Select Board for this committee.</p>	<p>No votes needed</p>
1.	<p>Approval of Minutes from previous meeting - Vote Required</p>	

	<p>Edits to the meeting minutes were discussed and recommended. The committee agreed to table this until a future meeting once edits to the notes could be made.</p>	<p>Mr. Ternullo motioned to table this item. Mr. Mahoney seconded; all in favor.</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Council on Aging Presentation and discussion</p> <p>Kristen Spence, the Director of The Council on Aging, presented information on the services they provide along with budget information.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Council on Aging’s facility, the Almshouse, is on the National Register of Historic Places and the Council's budget includes maintenance and upkeep of the building and grounds. The building not only provides services for the Council but also hosts various town groups and is a cooling center during heat events. ● Mr. Mahoney inquired about volunteers to aid in the maintenance of the building and assist with some of the deferred maintenance. Mr. Sheehan noted that the town has been building shared facilities resources with the schools but we are starting with zero. Mr. Sheehan noted that at a future meeting of the committee could address the capital needs of the town including the Council on Aging. ● There was also a discussion about renting out the building for events. This was something that was done in the past; however, the revenue generated at the time did not offset the additional staffing costs that were required. Additionally, the house would need to have improvements completed before being offered as an event space. ● Essential services provided include transportation, congregate meals, SHINE, Outreach, Elder Law Pro Bono services, AARP Tax Prep, and Monthly Health Screenings. ● The Council receives state funding of \$16 per senior, defined as a person over age 60, which is used to pay for programing, bus drivers, and other professionals. The Center is open to all seniors across the state because of the state funding; however, Stoneham residents are given preference in registration. ● There was a discussion about the potentially aging population of Stoneham and the future increase in demands for the services being provided by the Council on Aging. Mr. Mashburn had a question about at what senior population point does the Center need to add staff. ● The committee had questions about potentially increasing revenue by charging more for certain programs offered at the Senior Center. ● The Council is hosting fundraisers frequently including the barn sale to provide some donations to help fund programming and staffing. The Council has access to \$200k in a donation account but that amount is mostly from a one-time gift a number of years ago so tapping into those funds would not be a sustainable way to run beyond this year. 	<p>No votes needed</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mr. Ternullo asked about sponsorship opportunities for local businesses to get additional support for the Center. An example that was discussed was signage in the parking area used for youth sports. ● Ms. Spence discussed the impact of the budget cuts, describing them as exhausting, devastating and putting the center into crisis mode. Additionally, she described the concern and unease on the part of staff and town residents that utilize the Center’s services created by the budget situation. ● The budget was reduced in the most recent fiscal year from approximately \$290k to \$139k. Ms. Spence confirmed that there was no room for additional cuts, and that additional funding would be helpful. She stated that restoring the \$100k in cuts would allow the Council to sustainably run their current programs and at least maintain current staff. 	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Library Presentation and discussion</p> <p>Rachel Overbeck, the Library Director, gave a presentation on the library’s budget, certification status, and services provided to the community.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ms. Overbeck summarized the services provided to town residents including the Library's physical collection, the digital collection, programs, meeting rooms, and access to resources through reciprocal agreements with other libraries that comes as a benefit of being certified. ● Ms. Overbeck provided details about the risk of the library being decertified, the impacts of decertification including loss of approximately \$57k in funding, the waiver process, and the process for recertification under different scenarios. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Requirements for continued certification include open hours requirements and minimum spending on materials for patron use. ● Under the current FY budget, the library has had to cut hours and programming but was able to maintain staff (there were some retirements that impacted staffing levels). This year’s budget included the town allocating capital from “Free Cash,” or money that would have been used for reserve accounts in other years. ● A hypothetical scenario involving a 50% cut to the budget was reviewed showing significant cuts impacting staffing, open hours, and programming. ● Ms. Overbeck believes that having funding restored to \$994k would require minimal service impact and would allow for restoration of service and maintain certification. ● The committee asked about meeting space and potentially being able to charge for that space. The meeting spaces are currently provided for free since all meetings are requested to be open to the public. 	<p>No votes needed</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The library has donations and trust funding available. The trust funding has limitations on what the funds can be used for. There is \$200k in the donation account but that is not seen as a reliable funding source since contributions annually are not significant. For this year, the library will tap into the donation and trust accounts to fund the materials requirement for certification. ● Library staff belong to two different unions and those union agreements clarify what roles can be performed by staff of certain levels as well as place limits on the type of responsibilities that can be done by volunteers rather than staff. ● It was noted that the town is very close to a population threshold that would require additional resources (to fund staffing) be allocated to the library in order to meet higher requirements for open hours. If we are certified, when we reach the threshold, there is a 3-year grace period to meet elevated requirements. If we are not certified, the library would need to offer the elevated hours requirements to get recertified without state financial support. 	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Golf Course Overview</p> <p>Mr. Sheehan provided an overview of the revenue the town receives from Unicorn and Stoneham Oaks Golf courses.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The agreement with Sterling Golf Management provides the town with 25% of the total revenue generated from the golf course. In 2024, that revenue was \$552,434.15 and is accounted for in the town budget as part of “Local Receipts.” ● The agreement with Sterling Golf Management ends in a year and there will need to be a new agreement put into place with whoever is selected to operate the course moving forward. There is a risk that the town may need to provide some additional capital improvements with a new contract. ● There were questions as to what the net revenue is once expenses are accounted for including capital costs and water. ● The golf course is Article 97 open space land and cannot just be sold or repurposed without a lengthy process with the state. ● Ms. Bilbo and Mr. Sheehan noted that the town's municipal courses are in the top five in terms of rounds played across the state. 	<p>No votes needed</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Structure of the Report</p>	<p>No votes needed</p>

	<p>The committee discussed potential report structures and what a final report may contain along with how it could be organized.</p> <p>Some highlights were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mr. Ternullo provided an excel template for town departments to complete to allow the committee to get a handle on the size of each department (in dollar terms as well as in employee terms) and amount of services provided to town residents over Fiscal Years 2022-2027. This date range is meant to allow the committee to understand historical town demand for services, cuts to departments, current budgets, and future requests. ● Mr. Joffe noted that the committee should agree on what total revenue is for each department. The committee discussed adding in grant revenue to understand what departments bring in and how grants are used in the budget process. ● The committee reviewed override committee reports from other Massachusetts municipalities. It was generally agreed that this committee’s report should be kept rather short, closer to 5 pages rather than over 100, and that the report should be written for the Select Board rather than be something written for town residents. ● Mr. Ternullo discussed getting additional information on the 45 recent override votes. He noted that it would be helpful to understand if those municipalities were towns or cities, what the outcome of the vote was, what the amount of the override request was, and what state aid the municipality was receiving. ● While understanding other town information is important and helpful to know, the committee discussed focusing the report on Stoneham-specific issues and facts rather than making comparisons to other towns. ● The high-level breakdown of the report was discussed to be a basic summary of departments including needs and shortfalls with references (links) to presentations/cover pages given to this committee. ● Mr. Dowdle requested some additional information about potential property tax credits for seniors, low income residents, and/or disabled residents. He also noted wanting some additional information about the town’s accounting structure and oversight. ● Mr. Stavre requested some additional information on the drivers of shared expenses including healthcare and insurance costs. 	
6.	<p>Upcoming meetings and Schedule</p> <p>No changes or questions were discussed on this topic.</p>	<p>No votes needed</p>
7.	<p>Upcoming Budget Information Session at Stoneham PD on 7/24/25</p>	<p>No votes needed</p>

	Several members expressed interest in attending the meeting. There was a discussion that members would not be attending in their capacities as members of this committee to ensure compliance with open meeting laws.	
8.	Other business – Non-Deliberative None.	No votes needed
9.	Adjournment	Mr. Ternullo then introduced a motion to adjourn; Mr. Mahone seconded; all in favor.