

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, March 11, 2024 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Robert Fedell, Jonathan Sylbert

Participants: Jeff & Melissa Bye, Willard Platt, Ron Pachulski, Mary Turek,

Remote Participants: Dominic Konstam, Mitchell Birkett, Roger Brown, Mike Lutynski, Carl Nett, Douglas Miner, Barbara Cormier

1. Call to order: Note that the meeting is being recorded

2. Finance Committee Appointment

The Finance Committee Appointment Committee convenes their meeting.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to appoint Dominic Konstam to the Finance Committee

Mitchell Birkett	Aye
Roger Brown	Aye
Dominic Konstam	Recuses

The Finance Committee will meet on Thursday, 3/14 at 6:00pm.

3. Review Business License – New Boston Crane, Auto Class II

The Select Board sign the business license for New Boston Crane.

4. Notice of Proposed Land Acquisition Announcement

Steve summarizes that the state sends notification when they intend to purchase land in your Town and it is the Select Board's responsibility to announce the proposed sale.

The land in question is on Cold Spring Rd, Parcel ID 405-0-5.2. The proposed use of this land is protected open-space and recreation as a part of Otis State Forest. See attached locus map for reference to land location.

5. Discuss Short Term Rental Registration Fee

Douglas announces the Short Term Rental Bylaw was approved by the Attorney General with no changes. He notes there are strict rules and regulations that come with the bylaw, which will likely require significant time to register and enforce. The Town

Clerk is responsible for registration. Douglas contacted surrounding Towns for reference. Great Barrington charges a \$200.00 annual registration fee on top of other required fees and taxes. However, GB has noted \$200.00 is too low for the work involved, and suggests \$300-500. GB also uses a third party to locate all of the STRs in Town to assure compliance. However, the third party is very expensive and would likely cancel out any revenue Sandisfield may make on the STRs. Douglas proposes a \$500.00 annual registration fee.

Steve would like to see a registration form and have a better understanding of the time it will really take to register the STRs before determining the fee. He notes that AirBnB already registers their rentals with the state. Building Inspector, Paul Greene has confirmed that other Town's only charge \$50.00 for registration with the Town and all the other inspections, including Fire Inspections, are separate expenses.

Barabra Cormier does not agree with setting the registration fee at \$500.00, as Sandisfield is a much smaller scale than Great Barrington. Additionally, there are many STR owners in Town eager to register and comply with the bylaw and she does not want to encourage failure to comply due to expensive fees. She notes the possibility of utilizing the Senior Tax Work-Off Program for administrative work on STR registrations.

Jonathan notes that the Bylaw is officially in place, so the Select Board should not wait too long to formally establish the registration fee. Douglas will gather examples of registration forms and create one that is appropriate for Sandisfield. He notes that the fee can always be changed.

6. Budget Discussion

The School Budget increased again. FRRSD is holding a Budget Hearing on Wednesday, 3/13 and a vote to finalize the budget will take place the following week.

7. Town Manager Updates/Project List

The contract for finishing the repaving of the rest of Route 57 is in the process of being reviewed and signed. This project will hopefully be scheduled for Summer 2024.

FY24 One-Stop Expression of Interest for MassWorks Grant is open. Deadline is April 30th. Jonathan is working with MassDOT on addressing the application for work on Dodd Rd.

The books for FY23 have officially been closed and free cash can be certified.

8. Select Board Updates

Robert Fedell reports that Mary Turek wrote an article in the Sandisfield Times stating that the Select Board deprived Sandisfield of a safety official by not reappointing Ralph Morrison to the Fire Department/EMS. Robert would like to clarify that prior to COVID-19, Towns needed two EMTs to respond in an ambulance, so Ralph held an EMT license so he could always be a driver. As far back as Robert can remember, Ralph has never done patient care and only had the license to be a driver. At the start of COVID-19 the state changed the law, so ambulances no longer needed two EMTs. Instead, ambulances needed one EMT for patient care, and a Fire Responder or above to drive the ambulance. He reiterates, a Police Officer, Fire Fighter, or First Responder with an active CPR card can legally drive the ambulance in MA. He goes on to state that by not reappointing Ralph, the Select Board did not strip the Town of an EMT, as he did not do patient care. The Select Board may have removed an ambulance driver, but there are many other qualified drivers in Town. Additionally, upon reaching out to surrounding Towns about the possibility of getting assistance covering EMTs and filling the Fire Chief position, it became obvious that no one was willing to join Sandisfield so long as Ralph was still heavily involved in the Department. Not reappointing Ralph was an attempt to open more opportunities in filling these much needed positions. Robert notes that Ralph is still heavily involved, as he is the head of the nonprofit, Fire Department Inc. Additionally, Ralph has still not signed the Memorandum of Understanding (an agreement for finding a suitable Fire Chief) that all the Select Board members, Town Manager, and Deputy Chiefs, Mike Morrison and Eric Pachulski have all signed back in December 2023. Robert notes that during the meeting where it was decided not to reappoint Ralph, he weighed in heavily by questioning whether this would be detrimental to the functionality of the ambulance. However, in reality Ralph was a driver not an EMT.

It's noted that Alec Morrison and Shamus Gaherty have both completed their EMT schooling and are now in the process of registering nationally, where they will then register with the state for their licensure.

9. Future Agenda Items

10. Topics Not Anticipated

11. Review and vote to approve minutes of meetings

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the 2/12 Select Board minutes

Steve Seddon	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

12. Review and sign purchase orders, warrants, and mail

13. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:23pm

Steve Seddon

Robert Fedell