

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, March 25, 2024 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Robert Fedell, Jonathan Sylbert

Participants: Barbara Cormier, Jeff Bye, Willard Platt, Mary Turek, Ron Pachulski

Remote Participants: Dominic Konstam, Mitchell Birkett, Mike Lutynski, Carl Nett, Douglas Miner

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

2. Joint Meeting with Finance Committee

• Budget Discussion

Mitchell Birkett requests clarification on the newly added budget for the Planning Board to access legal resources. Steve explains it gives the Planning Board the ability to reach out independently to Legal regarding their bylaw creations, as this is a crucial step in getting a bylaw included on the warrant.

There is a request for clarification on the Transfer station budget. Jonathan explains Solid Waste Disposal has been level funded, as the Town is contracted with Roger Trucking for the amount listed. However, there is an increase in Solid Waste Salary to accommodate increasing the hours of operation back to 19 hours per week. Steve notes Transfer Station Attendant, Keith Larson submitted a petition signed by around 200 taxpayers to increase the hours of operation back to 19 hours per week.

The DPW Superintendent and DPW Admin Assistant budgets are questioned, as the Super. position is still vacant and the Admin position has increased. Jonathan explains the Town is still actively looking to fill the Super. position, and the Admin position increased to accommodate an increase in hours and a slight increase in wages.

Steve proposes increasing the Animal Control Officer stipend to \$1,800.00 and the Animal Inspector stipend to \$750.00 in an attempt to fill these vacant positions.

The Select Board briefly reviews the Capital Plan. The ambulance is due for replacement this year; Jonathan notes that a demo ambulance should be available, while a new ambulance could take over two years to receive. The DPW Freightliner is also due for replacement; \$300,000 will be moved from Free Cash for this expense. Dominic questions whether the Town can postpone the purchase of a freightliner until

FY26. Jonathan explains the Town postponed last year and the cost for any repairs that may need to be made to the one currently in use will be very expensive in itself.

There is a brief discussion on road maintenance and the possibility of significantly increasing the road budget to properly repair and maintain the roads, especially the dirt roads. Steve notes that there are many grant opportunities should the Town hardtop the dirt roads after the maintenance.

It's noted that General Stabilization should be 10% of the total budget, which will be \$450,000.00. Capitalization Stabilization should also be 10% at \$450,000.00.

An Enterprise Fund will be created for the Ambulance. All costs will be accounted for in this fund, including health insurance. This will help determine what exactly the ambulance department costs the Town. Jonathan will propose to have 100% of the ambulance revenue go towards the ambulance, rather than 50% going towards the Town, as it previously was.

Carl Nett proposes eliminating the Public Safety Officer position, as the employee holding the position has been out on leave for many months and there have been no complaints or complications due to their absence. Jonathan notes that the PSO was an experiment, but public safety is a subject the Town does need to address. Volunteers are dwindling, so the Town will likely have to hire full-timers. However, a full-time Firefighter/EMT may be in the Town's best interest. Police coverage should be evaluated separately to determine the true needs of Sandisfield.

3. Review Annual Town Business Licenses – A&M Auto

The Select Board signs one license for A&M Auto for an Auto Class II and another for Operation and Auto Repair, Garage & Wrecker Service, Sale of Tires & Motor Oil.

4. Discuss Short Term Rental Registration Fee

Douglas Miner created a draft Short Term Rental Registration Application. Sign-off from the Tax Collector must be added to the application and the Select Board must determine the registration fee. Steve notes that the processing time for the registrations will be equivalent to \$100.00 and recommends establishing the registration fee at \$100.00 to cover that cost. The Town will see revenue in the 6% excise being charged to all STRs instead of the registration fees.

There are 42 STRs registered with the state. To cover the increase in hours for the STR registration process, Steve proposes increasing the Assistant Town Clerk budget by \$4,200.00. At this time the Select Board is not looking into hiring an enforcement agent for the STRs.

Charging a higher amount for the STR registration fee is suggested. Steve notes that other Towns have a higher fee because they hire an enforcement agent. Additionally, the Town can revisit the fee annually and determine if an increase is needed. Jonathan notes that the registration fee is not only used to pay for the Town Clerk's time, but also to offset the increased use of the Fire and Police Departments. Steve mentions that the Town can apply Community Impact Fees up to 3% should an STR become problematic in any way.

Dominic Konstam, who has owned and operated an STR in the past, notes that the revenue generated for STR owners is very high and suggests the registration fee be increased from \$100.00 to at least \$500.00. Another option may be to establish a higher initial registration fee, but a lower annual renewal fee should the applicant remain in good standing.

Robert Fedell suggests an initial registration fee of \$250.00 and an annual renewal fee of \$150.00. Steve is agreeable to these fee amounts, and again notes it can be revisited next year.

5. Budget Discussion

6. Town Manager Updates/Project List

Carl Nett requests a member of Public Safety be required to post notice online regarding any emergency road closures, as there were many residents unaware of a tree down on Town Hill Rd this weekend causing re-routing. Jonathan agrees this should be done, and notes that the Town will be getting an emergency notification system that residents can sign up for.

7. Select Board Updates

The judge ordered a preliminary injunction to Jennifer Pilbin, stating that she is no longer allowed to use her property on West Hubbard Rd in any capacity. Sandisfield Sanitarians and DPW crew assisted in securing Jennifer's property on West Hubbard Rd. They removed generators, cords, gas cans, etc. Steve applauds Jayne Smith for her dedication to this case. The Town will now try to recoup some of the legal expenses.

8. Future Agenda Items

9. Topics Not Anticipated

Mary Turek asks for clarification on the responsibilities of the DPW Superintendent, as she does not believe anyone who previously filled the position did any grant writing. Potentially a grant writer could be hired instead of giving that responsibility to the DPW Super. Jonathan notes that an option would be to have the Town Manager and DPW Administrative Assistant do all the admin work, including grants, and hire another Laborer instead.

10. Review and vote to approve minutes of meetings

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the 2/20 & 3/11 Select Board minutes

Steve Seddon	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

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

12. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm

Steve Seddon

Robert Fedell