

Town of Sandisfield
Board of Selectmen

Minutes of meeting Monday, Dec. 10, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at the Town Hall Annex.

Officials present; Select Board: Mark Newman, Chair; Brian O'Rourke; George Riley. Others: Fred Ventresco, Town Administrator; Ralph Morrison, Fire Chief; Mike Morrison, Police Chief.

1. Review and sign minutes of meeting

2. Open bids for plowing.

Chairman Newman opened and read aloud the two sealed bids received:

A) C.W. Nelson Landscaping and Nursery, Sandisfield, MA, bid \$85.00/hour for plowing; \$90.00/hour for sanding and plowing services.

B) O'Neil and Son's Property Maintenance, Otis, MA, bid \$80.00/hour for plowing; \$88.50/hour for plowing and sanding services.

The Town Administrator pointed out that shoveling and treating the entrances and sidewalks was a required part of the bid as well, and was clearly stated in the specifications. Mr. Ventresco also pointed out that if the Board does accept any bid it must go with the lowest unless there is a valid reason, such as the bidder not complying with some of the requirements. It was noted that the two bidders bid identically except for the price. Selectman O'Rourke said that he checked some prices and that the going rate for plowing is over \$100.00/hr.

Selectman Riley made a motion to accept the bid from O'Neil and Son's Property Maintenance, Otis, MA; motion seconded by Selectman O'Rourke; motion passed 3-0.

3. Vote to hire new road superintendent

Selectman Riley pointed out that this is basically a formality because the Board has already offered the job to Mr. Brad Curry and he did accept it. Brad will start December 18, 2018. The board welcomes him aboard!

Motion by Selectman Riley to hire Brad Curry as the new Public Works Superintendent; motion seconded by Selectman O'Rourke. All voted in favor, Motion passed 3-0.

4. Ralph Morrison in to discuss creating a new position for a Public Safety Officer. Police Chief Mike Morrison and Fire Chief Ralph Morrison explained the following: The position would, if created, serve as a fireman, EMT, and police officer, would be full-time, and would service all of these Departments. The reasons we need this position are the increase in number of calls, the hours needed to service these calls, and the much-increased paperwork and regulations required for both the State and our ambulance billing company, among other reasons. Some statistics: 2017 there were 303 police calls, 73 fire, and 71 ambulances. In 2018, 294 police, 88 fire, and 121 ambulance calls, according to Pittsfield dispatch. These jobs have gone beyond a volunteer basis here in Town. Rico recently worked around 80 hours to do the paperwork to renew our ambulance license. Rico has been the one doing most of this reporting paperwork, along with John Burrows; Rico is not always available, especially in the summer. We were lucky he was available recently for the license renewal.

The Town's license states that we will provide 24/7 ambulance service to the Town, and to Tolland. If we cannot do this the State will not continue to allow us to have an ambulance service based in Town. The biggest complaint from the State and the billing company is that we are often late in getting our paper work in; this is unacceptable to them and they have warned us. We would need to call the position Public Safety Officer, not Police Officer because we cannot make a police officer do the other jobs of fire and ambulance/EMT.

The majority of our residents are now older, increasing the number of our ambulance calls. Ralph cannot afford to leave his personal business and devote as much time as he has to these services. He is not saying that he won't at present, but the Town needs to do something because he cannot continue to do this, and many of our other volunteers are in the same predicament. The ambulance brings money into the town: in 2015, \$37,000; in 2016, \$36,000; and in 2018, \$48,000. We were unable to respond to six calls recently, losing about \$6,000. The Chiefs suggested that this position could possibly help with other duties as

well. He/she could assist the building inspector with permitting and/or dealing with violations such as the with the trailers.

Mike Morrison read from a draft job description for the position and will give a copy to the Board. This proposed coverage would be a 12-hour shift, eight (8) of which would be on duty and present at the Police Department Monday through Friday 8AM to 4PM, answering calls, doing paperwork, among other duties. For the other four (4) hours he/she would be on call. If they work outside of this 12-hour window, they would be paid at the regular pay for those duties, not overtime. They estimate the base yearly pay would be approximately \$51,2000, including an estimated 100 hrs. of overtime, based on \$23/hour wage. Mike believes he could cut \$19,000 from the current Police salary budget.

The Board instructed Mike and Ralph to sharpen their pencils and come up with a solid figure of how much the Town could save from the Fire and Police budgets, and other savings or efficiencies and bring it back to them. The Board agreed among themselves that this sounds like a very good proposal from what they have heard tonight, but stressed that we need to show the townspeople the benefits of it. The chiefs would like the Board to put this on the next Annual Town Meeting warrant.

On another topic, Ralph said that we need to have an ordinance against false alarms, as we have been having issue here. The Board was in agreement.

5. Highway Department updates

The new building has heat and the Town Hall has water now. The new fuel system is moving forward, and the area is ready for installation. The new trucks are in New England, but still need to be fully assembled with the bodies and other apparatus. Each truck takes up to 200 hours to fully make ready. Not sure when they can fully begin working in the new garage. They will be putting in the septic tank this Thursday and Friday. The leach field will go in sometime in the spring. Electricians are working as well. The Board wants to have an open house as soon as the building is open.

6. Selectmen's updates

Update on Broadband meeting

Selectmen Riley and O'Rourke attended a meeting last week in Springfield with Crocker Communication, the broadband firm chosen by the Town to work with in bringing broadband to Sandisfield, members of Broadband Committee, and MBI. There is good news and bad news to report. The make-ready work is the issue that will make things move slowly; this is not only for Sandisfield but for all communities. We have to wait for Verizon since they own the poles. At the earliest, don't expect broadband for the entire community for two-and-a-half to three years. The good news is that we are moving forward. Also, Crocker is a small but well-established company, having been around since 1955; it is family owned and began in Greenfield, MA. Also, Crocker is willing to try to get service to Otis Woodlands if enough people there agree to commit to service. In addition, the government monies will not be affected by the wait. It actually took Otis the same amount of time to get where they are today, and Tolland is actually just beginning as well.

We are in the process of counting the culverts, stream crossings, and bridges for the Route 57 initiative. Please don't pull down any green ribbon/tape you might see along the roadway.

7. Town Administrator updates

The Town Administrator said that he is mainly working on budget at this time.

Update on Dodd Road culvert

Mr. Ventresco sent the third letter to Mr. Peyre. This time the Town warned him, in summary, according to Ventresco that since he has not repaired his driveway culvert that the Town will take whatever action is necessary to rectify the situation, including billing him and/or liening the property for the Town's costs. The Town Administrator has instructed the Public Works Superintendent to get this repaired as soon as possible, as the Board has instructed him. Interim Superintendent Newman said he will get to it as soon as they can but they are working on some other pressing things at this time, and of course if the weather cooperates.

8. Discuss future agenda items

These will be determined later.

9. Review and sign warrants

10. Review mail

11. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair

Meeting adjourned 8:25 p.m.

Mark Newman

Brian O'Rourke

George Riley