

# Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

May 2, 2022

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, May 2, 2022 at 7:00PM at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: George Riley, Alex Bowman, Steve Seddon, Jonathan Sylbert

Called to order at 7:00PM

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

## **2. Convene joint meeting with Finance Committee to review ATM budget articles**

Jonathan Sylbert notes that the only changes to the operating budget include increasing Operations, Maintenance and Repair by \$2,200, Operation Maintenance salary increased to a total of \$5,000, and the fuel account is likely to be low because the price and usage continues to increase.

George motions to increase the Vehicle Fuel Account by \$5,000. Steve seconds. George revises his motion. He motions to increase the Vehicle Fuel Account by \$10,000, which would be a total budget of \$50,000. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Annual Town Meeting warrant Article 1 will establish the elected official salaries, Article 3 will go over the operating budget, and Article 4 reviews the revolving funds. Steve notes that the Building Department, Town Building Inspector revolving account was increased and should reflect the agreed upon \$12,000.

Article 5 and 6 refer to borrowing for the Highway Department's roller and grader. Borrowing requires two votes, a 2/3 vote at Town Meeting and a majority vote at Town Election.

Article 7: \$84,756.00 for road engineering from Free Cash

Article 8: \$18,000 for an audit from Free Cash

Article 9: \$9,500 for recruitment firm for Town Manager search from Free Cash

Article 10: \$10,000 for Assessors tri-annual recertification from Free Cash

Article 11: \$350,000 for a used fire truck from Free Cash

Article 12, 13 and 14 are all related. Jonathan reports it's been decided to take the Ambulance fund out of a revolving account and put it into a stabilization fund that will be dedicated to the purchase of an ambulance. This would also allow revenue and fees to be deposited into this stabilization. Article 12 allows for revenue to be accepted into a stabilization. Article 13 and 14 will specifically move the Ambulance Revolving account to the Ambulance Stabilization fund.

Article 15 allows the town to appropriate \$11,413.85 from Yanner Park Stabilization to Yanner Park Expenses. Article 16 will reduce the tax levy, and Article 17 will pay for bills submitted after the deadline to pay.

The Select Board requests the comments and impressions of the Finance Committee. Roger notes that the Finance Committee is not supportive of borrowing for the roller or grader because they believe there is sufficient Free Cash that will not take Sandisfield to the levy limit ceiling.

Jonathan recommends borrowing now to avoid borrowing when the interest rates are higher, for they appear to be moving in that direction. Just as well, Sandisfield has not borrowed very often. Jonathan reports that the town would borrow for the machinery in one year notes, the first year at an interest rate of 1.6%. Then they will re-evaluate the situation annually to determine what the best method of payment would be, for the interest rate would change each year. Roger still does not agree with this payment method, and recommends utilizing Free Cash, which would significantly exhaust these funds.

George requests the opinion of the other Finance Committee members, Roger reports they are all in agreement on this matter. Miles Reynolds states he does not think the town should borrow if the money is available. Larry Dwyer requests further discussion with the Finance Committee, for it was unclear before that the borrowing would be reviewed annually. Calvin Rodman notes that the purpose of this meeting was to better understand the Select Board's rationale for borrowing, which they have gotten.

The Select Board goes over some additional Finance Committee questions. First it is confirmed that the town has received an extension on the Broadband project payment start date.

There is a question about the Town Clerk salary and hours; George reports that since the Town Clerk position was previously combined with the Select Board Assistant position there is not a clear definition of what hours were dedicated to which position. Jonathan notes that while they are unsure of the appropriate amount of hours for the Town Clerk, they plan to avoid paying for health insurance by keeping the Town Clerk at 19 hours a week, and increasing the hours of the Assistant Town Clerk. Election Workers have also been taken out of Town Clerk salaries and put into their own budget line.

It's questioned why the Recreation Committee budget has increased significantly, it's noted there are more opportunities to gather and the Rec Comm has begun plans for many exciting events.

The Finance Committee requests an explanation of the benefit of hiring a recruiting firm for the Town Manager position. The benefit would simply be to find qualified candidates to fill this position in the most professional way possible. Should the town decide they do not want to hire the firm, a local search will be done as it has been in the past.

Clarification on the Assessors tri-annual recertification is requested. Jonathan explains it is more transparent not to include this expense in the operating budget, for it only occurs every three years.

Mary Kronholm reports that a question can only be put on the ballot if it is received by the Town Clerk's office in writing 35 days prior to the Town Election. She will confirm with Town Counsel, but believes that should the town want to vote to borrow for the roller and grader they would need to hold another Special Town Meeting and Special Election. Jonathan will reach out to Town Counsel tomorrow to confirm whether there can be an exemption as to putting the question on the ballot.

### **3. Adjourn joint meeting with Finance Committee**

George motions to adjourn the meeting with the Finance Committee. Alex seconds.

### **4. Review and sign minutes of meetings. Points to minutes**

### **5. Review and sign purchase orders**

### **6. Discuss and sign Year-End Transfers**

George motions to accept the year-end transfer of \$4,551.02 for Fire/EMS Compensation from the Public Safety Officer account. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

George motions to accept the year-end transfer of \$1,369.52 for utility and maintenance bills paid under Operations, Maintenance & Repair from the Public Safety Officer account. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

George motions to accept the year-end transfer of \$2,959.78 for utility and maintenance bills paid under Operations, Maintenance & Repair from the Public Safety Officer account. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

### **7. Open mowing bid**

George motions to accept the mowing bid of \$17,250 from McCuin Landscaping for two seasons. Steve seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

George motions to amend the Highway Mowing/ Cemetery Maintenance budget from \$17,000 to \$17,250. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

### **8. Vote to appoint a Records Access Officer**

Douglas Miner reports Mary Kronholm is currently the Records Access Officer; Douglas will need to be appointed alongside her, so whoever is in the office at the time can handle any public records requests that come in.

George motions to appoint Douglas Miner as a secondary Records Access Officer. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

### **9. Discuss and sign the Broadband Contribution and Assessment Agreement Amendment**

The Select Board received confirmation that the assessment of the Broadband project will not begin until July 1, 2023, which gives the town a year to renegotiate their payment contract and find other funding sources. The Select Board signs the agreement amendment.

### **10. Discuss and vote on Town Building Maintenance position requirements**

George reads the drafted job description for a Town Building Maintenance position. This position would be part-time on-call. Steve proposes the position work 16 hours per month at \$40/hours a week. This is a tentative wage, but notes that all contractors charge prevailing wage at Town buildings which would be significantly more. This position would not receive benefits and require their own insurance. The job description will state part-time, flexible hours.

Mike Morrision suggests hiring town hall employees, including this position, who can also serve as EMT/Firefighter. Those willing to take on these additional roles would be given priority. The position will be posted on the town website.

### **11. Review Annual Town Meeting warrant articles: Approve Lighting/Dark Sky bylaw**

Joanthan reports that the Cannabis, Accessory Dwelling Unit, and Shared Driveway bylaws are on the Annual Town Meeting warrant as written by the Planning Board.

George reads the purposes of the proposed Lighting/Dark Sky bylaw, which include protecting the rural character of the town, protecting the dark sky, promoting use of advanced lighting technology and controlling light trespass. This bylaw will pertain to all new construction or renovations.

George motions the Select Board adopt the bylaw as Chapter 8, Section 17 of the General Bylaws of the Town of Sandisfield. Alex seconds. Discussion begins.

Steve expresses concern that the bylaw has been rushed, for this is the first time the bylaw is being addressed in a Select Board meeting and no Public Hearing was held. He expects that many residents will be hearing about this bylaw for the first time during the Annual Town Meeting. He suggests waiting until the next ATM or Special Town Meeting. Although Alex does not feel the bylaw is very controversial, he does support all residents having the opportunity to have a conversation about it before the bylaw is presented at the ATM. However, since it is very "tame" he initially sees no issue in putting it on the warrant.

John Field reports that there is a very specific process that goes into establishing these bylaws, and notes the importance of getting public input from the Planning Board and Sandisfield residents. He also reports that when this bylaw was addressed briefly by the Planning Board, it received very negative feedback.

It is questioned why the Select Board took over the development of the Lighting Bylaw since it was being addressed by the Planning Board. It's noted that the Planning Board handles zoning bylaws, while the Select Board deals with general bylaws. There is controversy about what category the Lighting bylaw falls into. It is also questioned how a bylaw like this would be enforced, for this is not addressed in the draft. Jonathan notes it would be difficult for a bylaw like this to pass without a clear enforcement policy and enforcement officer.

It is suggested this item be tabled by the Select Board, and allow the Planning Board to handle further development of the Lighting Bylaw next year. George expresses concern with returning the bylaw to the Planning Board, for he has not agreed with their process in the past.

The bylaw is withdrawn from being put on the warrant.

## **12. Town Clerk Updates**

Douglas does a brief update for the Town Clerk's Office, he notes that he has been working more than the allotted 14 hours a week and predicts the position may need to transition to full-time. Other projects he's working on include making dog license applications/renewals available online and organizing records.

## **13. Interim Town Manager Updates**

The warrant will be printed tomorrow through Kwik Print, the addresses will be printed directly on the material and sent out thereafter.

Jonathan reviews the interest rates. A Treasury note for one year falls between 1.6-1.8%, and a five year is around 3.5%. He predicts this rate will increase in the near future.

The Highway Department has an inventory of all the bridges and culverts in town, which have all been inspected up to 2020. The 2022 inspections will be received soon. This will allow a capital plan to be established.

Jonathan notes the importance of getting the Capital Planning Committee operating again, for it's been reported that the town cannot spend the million dollars in its stabilization fund without having a capital plan.

Jonathan has been working with the Treasurer and Accountant, and has determined that there are trust funds holding money, but the owner or use is unknown. Jonathan will begin to approve payroll alongside the Select Board from now on.

#### **14. Select Board Updates**

The PermitEyes process is discussed, it's decided that some boards/committees may need to contact Full Circle Technologies to confirm access has been granted to their Chairs. Alex questions whether addresses who currently have an active building permit can be publicly posted, which will allow for better enforcement.

Jonathan notes that Sandisfield assessments happen every 10 years, but suggests this be done more often. In his hometown of Monterey, the Board of Assessors conduct assessments as early as every three years. A goal is to make the Sandisfield Board of Assessors more proactive.

#### **15. Future agenda items**

Brad Curry in for DPW updates

#### **16. Review mail**

#### **17. Review and sign warrants**

#### **18. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting**

The Select Board signs Victor Hryckvich's business licenses.

Meeting adjourned at 10:11pm.

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George Riley

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Alex Bowman

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Steve Seddon