

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board
May 23, 2022

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, May 23, 2022 at 7:00PM at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Alex Bowman, John Field, Jonathan Sylbert

Called to order at 7:00PM

- 1. Call to order: Note that the meeting is being recorded**
- 2. Review and sign minutes of meetings. Points to minutes**
- 3. Review and sign purchase orders**

5. Appointment of Finance Committee vacancy

Steve mentions that during the budget process the Select Board decided to grant board/committee members stipends. There were some groups that were overlooked, but will be addressed in the next budget.

There are multiple vacancies within town boards/committees. As a way to promote fulfillment of these vacancies, the Select Board plans to address them during their meetings, beginning with the Finance Committee. It's noted that the Select Board has no authorization to appoint members within the Finance Committee, for this is the responsibility of the Moderator. However, with the ongoing vacancy, the Select Board thought it important to promote the available position.

6. Discuss transition/hiring process for Principal Assessor

The Select Board invites the Board of Assessors to give recommendations for the hiring process of a new Principal Assessor upon the current position holder's resignation. Bethany Perry, BOA Chair, notes she is disheartened to see Jacki Bitso leave the position, for she was an asset to the town and she believes the role will be difficult to fill. Mayflower, a contracted Assessing Firm, may be able to fill in temporarily, but will most likely cost significantly.

Mary Turek expresses concern that once an employee resigns after not receiving a requested salary increase, the town ends up paying significantly more money for their replacement. Steve notes that he felt it was irresponsible to give Jacki another \$5/hour raise after she just received one in August 2021 without doing their due diligence. Jacki

did present a salary survey from surrounding towns, but it was difficult to compare against Sandisfield. Steve had hoped to conduct more research, including obtaining a bid from a contractor to better understand how much Jacki's work is worth.

The BOA is responsible for the hiring of the Principal Assessor, but the Select Board will assist if requested. A job description and advertisement will need to be published for the job opening. It's suggested to post the position on the Massachusetts Association of Assessing Officers webpage.

It's suggested changing the policies to allow the BOA to dedicate more time to going out and taking updated photos of properties or identifying renovations and new construction.

7. Discuss stipend policy in regards to payment structure

The Treasurer noted that stipends should not be paid in advance to avoid losing the money should the recipient resign from their position early. Steve suggests any stipend under \$1,000 be paid annually, any stipend over \$1,000 be paid monthly or quarterly. The other members agree. The policy will be written up before the Select Board votes to approve it.

8. Discuss Country Journal article on budget

Jonathan explains the Country Journal published an article with misinformation about the budget. The first line that may mislead readers stated that the largest budget increase was Article 3 general government salaries. Article 3 included all general government expenses, not just salaries. The article also claimed that there was around \$500,000 being spent in salaries, which is incorrect.

The article also stated the Administrative Assistant to Town Manager & Select Board was a new position. This position is not new, but was removed from the Select Board Salaries budget line and put into its own new budget line. This helped to create transparency within this department.

The Assistant Town Clerk salary and Election Workers were also reported as new lines not in the fiscal year's budget. These lines were taken out of the Town Clerk salary budget line, again, to create transparency.

Reports were also made about the Operations, Maintenance and Repair budget being decreased, which Jonathan explains was the result of breaking out utility expenses from this budget line.

The article also stated that Yanner Park was eliminated from the budget. However, it states in Article 15 of the warrant that Yanner Park will receive the remainder of the funds that were in their stabilization fund.

9. Town Clerk Updates

10. Interim Town Manager Updates

Jonathan reports the town is allotted 12 email licenses, after which every additional inbox is \$80. He has been going through to deactivate some of the accounts that have gone unused. Jonathan suggests creating a policy for email accounts to avoid inboxes being reserved for nonactive members.

A Special Permit application has been sent to a resident looking to utilize her home as a mixed use space. A policy should be written up to identify the fees, regulations and steps that need to be taken to complete the special permit process.

Community Power Supply has increased their rates by \$0.002 per kw/hr, which is about \$1.20 extra per household per month.

There is a possibility of acquiring partial reimbursement for broadband through a grant opportunity to relieve municipalities of debts caused by these types of projects. This is not a definite option, but interest has been expressed.

KP Law has increased their hourly rate for legal services to \$225/hour from \$205/hour. There are a few other rate increases for comprehensive permit matters, zoning issues, etc. Due to the increase, Legal Services will go over budget this fiscal year because the rate increase was not anticipated before the ATM.

An extension from MassDOT has been awarded for the culvert bridge project.

There is some issue accessing the account associated with the ARPA funding. Jonathan and his assistant will continue to work out a solution.

There is no update on the zoning bylaw violations regarding people living in trailers/mobile homes without having an active building permit. The policy must be

enforced more strictly. It's questioned who enforces dilapidated building violations. Jonathan explains the Board of Health needs to visit the site and condemn the building.

11. Select Board Updates

The Select Board conducted a meeting to review their goals and initiatives for the year.

Steve and Jonathan are still looking into moving forward with broadband for the unserved homes on North Main Street. Alex has been conducting research for other funding sources for this project.

Alex has been in contact with MassDOT regarding options to reduce speeds on Route 183, which may include striping ten foot lanes. He has also been in touch with boards and committees about creating some community service programs to help build connections and better the town. Projects may include gardening or work at Yanner Park.

12. Future agenda items

Work Session to review financial policies to be held on Tuesday, May 31 at 11:00AM

Mary Turek explains she has heard rumors that a final layer had not been applied to the pavement on New Hartford Road. The Select Board cannot confirm whether this is true, but notes that most likely too much time has passed to put this additional layer on.

Mary also questions whether it was policy that should Joanne Grybosh return to town employment she would be required to give back the funds awarded to her upon her severance. The Select Board confirms this is not policy, and notes she will complete her work as DPW Secretary at the end of June.

Barbara Cormier notes repainting the COA room could be an effective use of the ARPA funds.

Barbara notes that the Planning Board is going to vote on discontinuing the use of Zoom for their meetings due to lack of equipment. She suggests the town provide the boards/committees that meet at Old Town Hall with proper equipment for their meetings or allow the use of the Select Board room and equipment at Town Hall. Members believe Zoom is an asset outside the scope of COVID. The Select Board will purchase the new equipment for Old Town Hall.

4. Discuss and sign Year-End Transfers

Steve motions to transfer \$1,516.95 to Operations, Maintenance and Repair from Public Safety Officer. John Field seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

Jonathan reviews the accounts that will receive transfers based on anticipation of being overspent. Roger Brown questions why accounts cannot go into deficit and one transfer be done at the end of the fiscal year. Jonathan explains this is not a legal practice and will confirm with Town Counsel.

Steve motions to transfer \$1,000 to Solid Waste Salary, \$3,325.37 to Complete Streets Grant, \$6,000 to Vehicle Fuel, and \$2,000 to Mowing, all from Public Safety Officer Salary. Additionally, transfer \$6,000 from Highway Snow/Ice Removal and \$20,000 from Highway Snow/Ice Salary into Machinery Maintenance. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

13. Review mail

14. Review and sign warrants

15. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:32PM

Steve Seddon

Alex Bowman

John Field