

# Town of Sandisfield

## Select Board

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Tuesday, September 6, 2022 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Alex Bowman, Jonathan Sylbert

Called to order at 6:30PM

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

### **2. Sign 20(d) Disclosure form for John Field**

John Field received a form from the State Ethics Department giving him permission to bid on tree work for the town while serving on the Select Board. Steve Seddon and Alex Bowman sign.

### **3. Appoint Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization Representative**

An MPO representative must be designated to attend a meeting where one representative will be chosen among 11 other municipalities to serve as the Southeast Berkshire subregion's representative.

Steve motions to appoint Alex Bowman as MPO representative for Sandisfield. Alex seconds. Motion passes.

### **4. Discuss Bylaw Review Committee**

Jonathan notes that there are numerous general bylaws that are poorly written, no longer relevant, or do not cover everything. Monterey has a Bylaw Committee of five elected members that will review bylaws annually and make suggestions for updates, which the Select Board can then bring to Town Meeting. The committee can be appointed or elected.

Alex motions to establish a General Bylaw Review Committee of five appointed registered voters for the purpose of reviewing the town general bylaws and preparing such revisions and amendments as may be necessary. Committee is tasked with recording their recommendations to the Select Board by March 15 or the deadline to submit input for the Town Warrant, whichever comes later. Steve seconds. Motion passes.

### **9. Discuss Purchase Order Policy**

Jonathan reports that the current purchase order policy in the bylaws is incomplete and requires the Select Board to sign off on any emergency purchase orders, which is unhelpful since the Board only meets weekly. Alex reads a drafted written Purchase Order Policy based on the Select Board's vote on August 22, 2022 which makes the Town Manager the primary approver of purchase orders, and the Select Board the alternate.

Alex motions to adopt the purchase order policy as read. Steve seconds. Motion passes.

## **5. Discuss and vote to order GPS devices for all town owned equipment and vehicles**

Money was appropriated to install GPS in all DPW vehicles and equipment, which will aid in accountability and transparency. Steve suggests including the Police and Fire Department vehicles as well. A quote was received from Mobile Asset Solutions, which operates off every cell tower, unlike the GPS systems directly from Verizon. GPS will promote safe driving practices, and assist in developing itineraries.

Alex will reach out to the sales representative for more information regarding the services provided and how quantifiable the data is before a decision is made. The item is tabled until next week. DPW, Fire and Police will be invited to voice their opinions as well.

## **6. Discuss Zoom policy for Boards and Committees**

Boards/committees were asked if remote capabilities should be required for all meetings; all respondents agreed Zoom should be available. Steve reports there is a laptop and Owl camera system at the Old Town Hall available for all boards/committees to use. It's suggested an additional Zoom account be created for use at the Old Town Hall.

A training on the Owl and accessing Zoom accounts will be scheduled for all boards/committees who are not already familiar with the equipment. The Select Board strongly encourages all boards/committees to hold hybrid meetings.

## **7. Minery Property Update**

Jonathan reviews all the minutes dating back to 2021 - early 2022 where the Minery property was discussed. He notes that recent recommendations from Smitty Pignatelli

and DOR have already been exhausted. It's noted individual properties cannot be sold because there is a lien on all of the Minery properties.

Should Mass Audubon pay the back-taxes completely, they would be able to purchase the property. Kate Buttolph, Mass Audubon Land Protection Specialist notes that being a nonprofit requires raising all usable funds, and they have already spent more than anticipated this year on fuel. That being said, she recommends the town waive all interest accumulated on taxes for the properties. Forgiving the interest would require permission from the state.

There are three factors that must be present to warrant approval of an application for authority to abate a tax or charge:

- Taxpayer is prevented by extraordinary/mitigating circumstances from seeking an abatement through the usual abatement process. Minery was in ill-health, unable to pay medical bills or RE taxes, and had no other assets. However, this may not constitute mitigating circumstances.
- Abate of the tax or charge is warranted by the facts. This is where the Select Board would explain only the interest is to be forgiven.
- Substantial inequity, grievous hardship or public benefit. Getting the dump cleaned up and having the land go to conservation would qualify as public benefits.

Without an Assessor to recalculate the penalties on the Minery properties, Sandisfield is not in a position to bring the request up to DOR again. Jonathan will write a summary of the situation and send it to Kate. Once Kate approves the summary, the Select Board will sign and give it to the Assessors.

## **8. Discuss and vote to send Community Outreach flyer by mailer to residents**

The Planning Board would like to send out a flyer to advertise the Community Outreach meeting scheduled for September 23, 2022. Steve supports spending the money to send the flyers out in order to get as many people to attend the meeting as possible.

All mailing options are being looked into. However, should the town put a stamp on every flyer, it would cost around \$600.00 for postage. Alex notes the meeting was publicized in the Sandisfield Times which was already sent to every home in Sandisfield. Jonathan suggests sending postcards which would be less postage and paper. Encouragement to sign up for town website notifications should also be included on the mailer.

Alex suggests setting up sandwich boards around town to promote the meeting, including the library, Town Hall, Old Town Hall, Transfer Station and Post Office. Item is tabled.

## **10. Financial policies**

Item is tabled.

## **11. Interim Town Manager Updates**

Sandisfield has an electrical aggregation contract with Colonial Power Solutions, which is active until January 2023. The contract must be renewed by November of this year. Colonial Power Solutions recommends that Sandisfield sign a contract for a year and then average it out over three years. Otherwise the town could wait until November, but the cost could potentially increase significantly. Currently the basic electrical service has increased to \$0.221/kWh. Sandisfield can lock the price in for one year at \$0.22724/kWh. It's important to note that when the price drops in summer 2023, residents will still have the option to opt out of the program in order to obtain the lower rate, and return to the program in the winter.

Sandisfield was able to get their UEI number and the ARPA funds were received. Sandisfield was awarded with \$46,621.84. There will be one additional ARPA payment, the county payment, which has yet to be determined.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission will be getting a grant for all 21 municipalities in Berkshire County that utilize PermitEyes. The grant will provide a free PermitEyes upgrade, which normally costs \$4,000.

From 2015-2020 the total loss incurred for running the ambulance in Tolland was \$129,500. The loss is attributed to the difference in cost of Medicare and prime insurance, as well as those who do not pay it off. Currently, Sandisfield is paid \$500 per call, despite the average cost totalling \$1,580. It's suggested Steve speak with Tolland's Select Board Chair, and request \$1,000 per call.

The Board of Health will send Jennifer Pilbin a letter inviting her to a BOH meeting. At the meeting, Jennifer will be asked to complete a water disposal permit application. The form will include what is and is not allowed according to MGL. Once the application is complete the BOH will conduct an inspection. If Jennifer does not come in for the permit, the BOH will pursue an inspection regardless.

A draft STM warrant will be produced for a meeting next week to be reviewed.

**12. Select Board Updates**

**13. Future agenda items**

**14. Review and sign minutes of meetings, purchase orders, and mail**

**15. Adjourn Meeting**

Meeting adjourned at 9:44pm.

---

Steve Seddon

---

Alex Bowman