

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, October 2, 2023 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, John Field, Robert Fedell (remote), Jonathan Sylbert
Participants: Michael Morrison, Ralph Morrison, Brad Curry, Barbara Cormier, Larry Dwyer, Ronald Bernard, Jeff Bye, Robert Platt, Willard Platt, Jane Kaufman, Lisa Leavenworth (remote), Amanda Leavenworth (remote)

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

8. Topics Not Anticipated

The Special Permit Hearing for South Branch Farm, LLC on 40 Viets Rd has been rescheduled to October 10, 2023 at 6:30pm.

2. Fire Chief & Police Chief in for Tanker Accident Update

Police Chief, Michael Morrison, who was the driver of the 1988 tanker during the accident, explains that he was responding to a fire in Otis when there was a problem with the directions he was given from another Fireman. He was told to take Dimmock Road to Stebbins Road, but could not locate Stebbins Road. Once he entered Tyringham, he made his way down a steep hill and upon applying the brakes, realized they had gone out. He attempted to stop or slow the vehicle using tactics learned through years of truck driving experience, but was unable to stop the vehicle. At the T-intersection at the bottom of the hill there was a large tree to the left and a telephone pole to the right. Michael opted for the telephone pole and rolled the tanker down the embankment. He confirms the tanker is totaled.

Neither Michael, nor Fire Chief Ralph Morrison can confirm what exactly happened with the braking system, but suspect a mechanical malfunction of some kind, noting they "got hot." Michael reports that he did have air in the breaks, but it did not apply the brakes hard enough to stop the vehicle. John Field questions when the slack adjusters were last maintained; Ralph will have to look at his records, but guesses they have not been touched since they purchased the vehicle in 2019, as they have only accumulated about 1,000 miles on it. It's explained that the tanker is not equipped with a Jake-brake, but instead has an engine brake.

Ralph clarifies that Michael was following him at the time of the accident. When Ralph realized they were going the wrong way, he turned around and called Michael on his cell phone to tell him to do the same. Steve notes that if the Town is to purchase used equipment, it's important that we have our own mechanics who can conduct a run through of the machine and properly assess its reliability. Michael confirms that a full service was completed on the tanker when it was purchased, and Ralph notes that when inspections were done, the brakes were checked and everything appeared to be in working order. John asks if the damage can be diagnosed at this time to determine if the tanker did in fact lose air pressure. Michael reports that the front axel and all the air lines were ripped out in the crash.

Steve expresses gratitude that neither Michael, nor anyone else was seriously injured. He notes that the Fire Department should use this situation as an example of the importance of conducting routine checks on the equipment. The Town still owns one smaller tanker. Ralph notes that due to the enormous weight of the tankers, typically the younger less experienced firemen do not drive it.

The insurance company has already come to take a look at the vehicle and have begun the process to estimate the replacement value. Once determined, the Fire Department will begin the search for a new tanker.

3. Brad Curry in for DPW Updates

Quality Fleet Service conducted maintenance on all the trucks in the DPW fleet, this included adjustments, brake checks, etc. The loader, roller and tractor still need maintenance checks. Repairs on lights were completed by Brad and his team. The tractor and loader have finally been registered and license plates have been acquired after some difficulties at the RMV.

A water line broke at Old Town Hall and had to be dug up by the DPW and then repaired by the plumbers. The DPW crew has been working on multiple small projects, including maintenance on drop inlets and shoveling out culverts. Steve notes after heavy rains, some residents' driveways tend to push debris into the road. Brad confirms this is the responsibility of the homeowners under Sandisfield's driveway bylaw. He will send letters to the homeowners in question notifying them of the problem, and can issue a fine should they not comply.

The two bids for an Operator/Equipment Rental were opened. After comparing the costs, the bid can be awarded to Western Earthworks. This will allow Brad to schedule

work to be done with equipment and operators the Town may not have. A 24-hour response time is written into the contract.

There is a brief discussion regarding hiring new DPW employees. Jonathan reports they will be re-advertising for a Laborer, Operator and Foreman now that union negotiations have established a competitive wage schedule.

Ron Bernard requested the DPW put out signs to notify residents of serious road obstacles, as Hammertown Road experienced some dangerous washouts after the heavy rain. Steve informs residents, should they ever have a request or complaint, they should reach out to the Town Manager.

Lisa Leavenworth questions why the DPW crew did not do tree removal on Silverbrook Road themselves, as there are crew members certified in tree removal and with logging experience. Brad notes that his crew did some tree removal, but found it was not being done as quickly as necessary to ready the road for its use as a detour route during the bridge closure. Additionally, there were a lot more trees that required being cut down than anticipated. Lisa expressed her disappointment that the DPW was not more preemptive with preparing the road for the detour.

Additionally, a few residents complained that the line of sight at the intersections in Town are unacceptable and report instances of potential collisions as a result. The DPW is asked to address the issue by removing the tall foliage and brush.

4. Sign Letter in Support of H.3852, An Act supporting electrical load aggregation programs in the Commonwealth

The letter is for the clean energy aggregation the Town participates in. By signing, the Town is given more flexibility on electrical contracts. The Select Board signs the letter.

5. Town Manager Updates/Project List

In FY23, the Town collected around \$344,000 more than anticipated in estimated receipts. This can be attributed to Mass Audubon's purchase of the Minery property for \$187,000, the DPW's disposal of surplus vehicles/equipment for a total of \$96,942, and Ambulance fees, which brought in \$65,986. All of these revenues will help reduce the tax levy.

The Town will begin to pay for the broadband loan, which will come off the cherry sheets as annual charges against receipts at \$71,777 per year. This is a 15 year, 3.5% loan.

Jonathan notes that the motor vehicle excise tax alone will cancel out the payments on the loan.

Sandisfield has picked up a vocational student who will be attending Taconic, which is a \$19,500 tuition and \$19,000 transportation expense. A Special Town Meeting will need to be held to pay for this unanticipated expense. Jonathan recommends using free cash to pay for the expense.

Jennifer Pilbin's property on West Hubbard Rd was scheduled to be auctioned on September 27, 2023. However, she filed for bankruptcy a few days prior and the auction was canceled. Jennifer now has to come up with a payment plan with the bank. Should she fail to make her payments, the bank will schedule another auction. The Board of Health has conducted an inspection of the trailer and property and deemed it uninhabitable. The Fire and Police Chief have both visited the property as well to notify Jennifer that she is not to illegally burn, as there were reports of her doing so.

In order to replace the driveway at Town Hall, the state requires there to be "public benefit." While the driveway is connected to the BRPC's hiking trail, the state recommends looking into installing EV charging stations. Jonathan hopes to delegate looking into grants for this project to the Green Committee.

6. Select Board Updates

Public Safety Officer, Mary Bredenfoerder, who has been out of work after suffering an injury on duty has reported that she is on the mend. She is doing physical therapy weekly and hopes to have a better idea of when she can return in two weeks after her next doctor's visit.

A Work Session needs to be scheduled to discuss the goals and priorities of the Select Board for the fiscal year, as well as all the Special Town Meeting items to be included on the warrant.

7. Future Agenda Items

8. Topics Not Anticipated

9. Public Comment

10. Review and vote to approve minutes of meetings, 9/18, 9/25

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the minutes as written of meetings 9/18 and 9/25.

Steve Seddon	Aye
John Field	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

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

12. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 7:47pm

Steve Seddon

John Field

Robert Fedell