

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Monday, January 22, 2024 at 6:30PM at the Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, John Field, Robert Fedell, Jonathan Sylbert (remote)

Participants: Douglas Miner, Emelia Fedell, Barbara Cormier, Carl Nett

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

2. Regional Agreement Amendment Committee (RAAC) Appointment

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to appoint Douglas Miner to the RAAC

Steve Seddon	Aye
John Field	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

3. Discuss Town Counsel & Litigation Policy

Steve reviews the proposed policy, which is based on another MA town's policy. The policy states access to Town Counsel must go through the Select Board Chair or Town Manager. Should a Town Official want to contact Town Counsel, they must receive prior explicit approval of either the Select Board Chair or the Town Manager. In an emergency, the other Select Board members may contact Town Counsel and provide the Select Board Chair with a summary of the issues discussed.

The policy currently states "Town Administrator" instead of "Town Manager." Steve corrects this.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the Town Counsel & Litigation Policy as amended.

Steve Seddon	Aye
John Field	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

4. Discuss Monthly Select Board Newsletter

Steve would like to send a postcard out to all Town residents to encourage them to subscribe to the website, as the Town plans to publish a monthly newsletter that will discuss Town business truthfully without bias. Should any Department Head/Board/Committee want to include an update in the newsletter, that is more than welcome.

Carl Nett recommends sending the newsletter via mail to all the homes in Sandisfield, as people will be more inclined to read a physical copy, rather than go online. Steve will look into how much a service like this will cost, and the Town can include it in the budget.

5. Budget Discussion

Jonathan reports that last week the Select Board agreed to target a \$150,000 operating budget increase, which is equivalent to around 4%. Currently, the budget is at \$148,989.00, which includes the COLA increases and other merit raises. A \$1,700.00 Technology budget increase was received today, which is not reflective in the total increase yet. The Tech increase includes CSS Ventures taking over the Police Departments IT. Jonathan added \$200.00 to the Planning Board budget to speak with Town Counsel on Zoning Bylaws, and \$14,000 to pay Fire/EMT for training hours. Jonathan reports the Transfer Station Attendant, Keith Larson has requested increasing the Transfer Station hours back to 19 hours/week. This increase has not yet been included in the budget, as it requires more discussion.

Jonathan notes that the Highway Department is the bulk of this fiscal year's increase, due to the wage rate increase as per the union contract. Health/Dental insurance has increased 8%. The Town currently insures for nine employees, despite only seven taking it.

Steve reviews a few questions he had justifying budget line amounts for the Memorial Day Parade, ambulance/vehicle repairs, and Fire/EMS Compensation. Detailed reports from FY23 will have to be reviewed in order to understand whether these lines should be decreased. Jonathan suggests holding a Work Session for this.

The Fire Chief Stipend has increased from \$11,000 to \$15,000. Jonathan reports that the Fire Department would like to hire a salaried full-time Fire Chief. Robert Fedell proposes the possibility of utilizing the Public Safety Officer salary to compensate for a full-time Firefighter/EMT position.

Carl Nett reports that he does not anticipate the School budget increase being over 3.5%. A 3.5% increase will push Sandisfield's budget over a \$200,000 increase. Jonathan notes that the Town should still look for savings within the operating budget, but Sandisfield has been deprived of a meaningful Town budget because they've been paying a penalty on the school budget.

6. Town Manager Updates/Project List

The Town resubmitted the expenses accrued from the heavy rain storms over the summer and will now receive a \$20,000 rebate.

7. Select Board Updates

8. Future Agenda Items

9. Topics Not Anticipated

Douglas reports the Attorney General has extended their review of the Short Term Rental Bylaw another 30 days from their deadline of January 23, 2024.

John Field requests an update on Dodd Rd, as a property owner is still without access to their land, which he finds unacceptable. Steve notes that at this point the project needs to be re-evaluated as the former DPW Superintendent's plan of laying down new material failed to solve the problem. John expresses concern that the longer we wait to address the road, the more money it will take to fix it. Jonathan notes that while the initial attempt to address the issue failed, it was not entirely the fault of the DPW, as the material was good, people drove all over the road despite closing and barricading it, the Town got three inches of rain immediately after putting the material down, and there are a number of residents on the road blocking culverts and building berms preventing drainage. Before any work can begin the Town needs an NOI from the Conservation Commission, but they do not meet until February. It's suggested to request a proposal from the Heavy Equipment Bid winner.

John Field requests Police Chief Mike Morrison provide an update on the Public Safety Officer who has been out of work since August 2023. Jonathan reports the Fire Department switched their insurance, which now provides injured on duty reimbursement of \$500.00 for five years. The Town pays the employee their full check amount, but is only reimbursed \$500.00 per week by insurance.

Jonathan reports that Jennifer Pilbin of 12 West Hubbard had an inspection on her property last Tuesday, 1/16, which she failed. Her court hearing followed on Thursday, 1/18. Jennifer argued that she was told she could no longer live in the trailer, but not told she could no longer live on the property. She claims she has since moved into a tent and her mother is now in a pod. The judge then reiterated Jennifer would need to find suitable housing within one week. Another inspection is scheduled for tomorrow, 1/23 to check for compliance followed by another court date on Thursday, 1/25.

10. Public Comment

11. Review and vote to approve minutes of meetings

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the minutes of meeting 1/16

Steve Seddon	Aye
John Field	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

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

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to approve the Town business license for DayDreamz Estates, LLC.

Steve Seddon	Aye
John Field	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye

13. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 8:12pm

Steve Seddon

John Field

Robert Fedell