

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

April 1, 2022

Minutes for Select Board Work Session with the Finance Committee held on Friday, April 1, 2022 at 5:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Alex Bowman, Jonathan Sylbert, Roger Brown by remote

1. FY23 budget planning

Steve Seddon and Roger Brown drafted a letter to send to DLS to request an extension of the Broadband project beyond the final completion date to July 2, 2022. The letter will be sent to the attorney for review on Monday. Should the extension not be approved, a tentative plan would be to spend around \$550,000 towards Broadband out of capital stabilization, \$250,000 would be reimbursed by ARPA, and the rest would come off the cherry sheet.

Roger questions the benefit of not paying for Broadband in full. Alex notes there is grant money available for Broadband expenses, and examples the Broadband Innovation Fund which has allocated \$100 million for these types of projects.

Jonathan has looked into the process, and sees no issue should the town decide to borrow for the roller. He has not heard back from Tom Scanlon with a price for an audit. Yanner Park has been removed from the operating budget, but included as a special article. The Select Board has not officially voted not to buy the dump truck.

Jonathan explains the possibility of including Assessor recertification as a special article, rather than including it in the operating budget. This recertification occurs every three years. A definite number needs to be confirmed for the recertification, as well as what the Assessors pay to Mayflower for their site visits.

All software that can be assigned to a specific department needs to be removed from Technology Expense. The only things to be included in this budget line should be software updates for the whole building or hardware. Jonathan has been in contact with an IT audit company, and expects an audit to be conducted this fiscal year for \$3,000.

The Highway Superintendent originally asked for an additional \$50,000 in Highway Machinery Maintenance because he was concerned about the upkeep on the grader and roller. However, since it's being budgeted to replace these two machines, the

additional funds do not need to be included. Jonathan will confirm with Brad a new number for this budget line.

Options regarding the Solid Waste Disposal budget include closing the fund, using the revolving fund until it's empty, or plugging in a number between the revenue and expense. The Accountant will confirm if Solid Waste Disposal Salaries are separate from Highway Salaries.

The town receives \$30,000 on the cherry sheets from Veteran's Benefits, but only \$4,000 in services. It's questioned why the full amount is appropriated only to have it returned as revenue and put into free cash. Jonathan recommends reducing Veteran's benefits by \$30,000 and leaving \$13,000 for safety.

They decide to level fund Elderly Transportation. Jonathan will confirm the Medicare budget amount with the Treasurer. Insurance and Bonds was significantly overspent this fiscal year. Jonathan estimated the proper amount for FY23 at about \$73,000. It's questioned why the town is paying for the Fire House insurance when they do not own the building and the expense is not in the lease agreement. The Town is responsible for insuring all the contents of the building, but it is questioned whether they are paying for two insurances since the vehicles and equipment should be insured under the insurance umbrella.

The Highway Maintenance budget was agreed to be split between that account and expenses, and a utilities line will be added as well. It's noted that the Transfer Station stickers should be the responsibility of the Town Clerk, not the Select Board Assistant.

Mary Kronholm recommended the Town Clerk position be 20 hours a week, with benefits, which would allow the Assistant Town Clerk to go from six total hours of work to four hours. Jonathan does not believe it's reasonable to pay for benefits for only one extra hour of work. Instead, he recommends the Town Clerk work 19 hours, and the Assistant remain at six hours. A written list of Town Clerk duties is requested.

Steve spoke with Ralph and Michael Morrision about purchasing a used fire truck for the department and transferring \$350,000 from free cash to capital stabilization to go towards the purchase of a new fire truck. This would avoid taking funds out of Ambulance revolving, which would be changed to Ambulance Stabilization.

It determined that there will be a 3% COLA for the Town Manager, Treasurer, Principal Assessor, Accountant and DPW Superintendent. Alex summarizes the history of the Principal Assessor salary increase. The Principal Assessor, turned in her resignation in

August. In order to keep her in the position, the Select Board agreed to give her a 10% raise, for she had not received one in over 10 years. The Select Board also agreed to research the position, and should her salary prove to be low, they would make the appropriate adjustments. However, no research has been done.

The Principal Assessor has requested \$40/hour for FY23; she currently makes \$35/hour. Jonathan notes he can research the position, but notes the results may be scattered, for some Principal Assessor's make \$40/hour, but without benefits, or others do not have an assistant. Alex will speak to the Principal Assessor, to assist in determining her rate of pay.

Jonathan recommends paying for Broadband with the cherry sheets, regardless of the possibility of the interest rate increasing. He suggests negotiating a lower interest rate. As far as the Select Board understands, ARPA funds can still be allocated towards this project, and that money can be taken out of free cash to be reimbursed.

The Select Board and Town Manager Assistant, Janey Beardsley made a request for a salary increase and included a survey done in New Marlborough. It's questioned where she would fall on this survey. It's possible that the hours of the position could increase, should the Town Manager hours decrease.

Jonathan notes it was proposed Janey would also take on the Treasurer/Tax Collector Assistant position; this has yet to be confirmed. It's questioned whether the Treasurer would need an assistant if they contract with a payroll service. Due to the extensive backlog, Jonathan recommends an assistant be hired. A conversation needs to be had with Janey to determine if she would consider increasing her hours in her current position, or if she would like to work eight hours in the Treasurer's office.

2. Sign Interim Town Manager contract

It's clarified that Jonathan has the ability to hire and fire while serving as Interim Town Manager. He notes that this is an important aspect of the position.

Roger questions the need for a Town Manager "Headhunter." Jonathan explains it's important for the town to do its due diligence when it comes to hiring a permanent Town Manager, and should Jonathan enjoy the interim position he will apply for the permanent position as well.

The Select Board is unable to sign the contract because a final copy had yet to be submitted by the attorney.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31pm.

Steve Seddon

Alex Bowman