

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

April 4, 2022

Minutes for Select Board Work Session with the Finance Committee held on Monday, April 4, 2022 at 5:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Alex Bowman, Jonathan Sylbert, John Burrows, Kathie Burrows, Ralph Morrison, Mary Turek, Douglas Miner, Larry Dwyer by remote

1. Discuss raising the stipend for boards and committees

2. Discuss FY23 budget planning

It's clarified that the Annual Town Meeting warrant can be amended during the meeting. Ralph Morrison reports he is open to purchasing a used fire truck, but it would still require a warranty. Steve Seddon suggests appropriating \$350,000 for a truck out of Free Cash. Ralph claims the only thing usable from their current truck would be the new hoses. Jonathan Sylbert notes there is a grant that can be utilized for the purchase of new airpaks. Jonathan summarizes the warrant article for Town Meeting would read that the purchase of a new or used fire truck would be contingent.

Steve suggests considering Roger Brown's recommendation of paying for Broadband in its entirety; it will cost \$250,000 in interest over 15 years otherwise. Jonathan explains the reasoning behind utilizing the cherry sheet. He notes that the town annually underestimates their revenue, therefore around \$76,000-80,000 goes into free cash from the cherry sheet every year, which means in 15 years the cherry sheet would cover the Broadband expense.

Just as well the town also underestimates the revenue from motor vehicle excise tax by about \$70,000 annually. If the town continued to underestimate this amount, there would be enough money dumped into free cash to pay for Broadband over the same 15 years. Utilizing this method would avoid taking funds out of stabilization that can be allocated towards other important projects. Jonathan recommends using ARPA funds to lower the total cost of the Broadband expense, negotiate an interest rate with the state, and pay the loan with motor vehicle tax.

Ralph suggests raising the stipends/wages for Police and Fire. This would be a way to get more members in the Fire Department. Jonathan notes that if the town were to pay for the training, instead of asking members to dedicate their time for free, this could be another way to motivate and entice members.

Steve would like to schedule a time to meet with the Town Manager Search Committee to discuss the status of their search. Jonathan explains the Collins Center would professionally begin the process.

It is determined that the 3% COLA would be awarded to all roles, excluding new employee positions. This would include Town Manager, Accountant, Treasurer/Tax Collector, Principal Assessor, Assessor Clerk, etc.

Alex reports he spoke with the Principal Assessor and explained that he did not believe giving her the requested \$40/hour raise would pass at Town Meeting. He suggested she present a case to justify the increase to the town which would include her tasks, the added workload, and the benefit of her certification. The Select Board agrees to only add the 3% COLA to the Principal Assessor's current salary.

Jonathan and the Select Board agree with contracting for a payroll service, for the Treasurer spends a significant amount of time on payroll bi-weekly. Softright and Point software should be moved from Technology Expense and into Treasurer Expenses.

There are a couple options to explore with the Town Clerk position. First, the Town Clerk could work 19 hours, and the Assistant work six. Second, the Town clerk works 25 hours, with a lower hourly rate and benefits and the Assistant works five. The third option would be that the Town Clerk works 19 hours and the Assistant works 10 to 15 hours.

Town Clerk, Douglas Miner notes that his tasks typically do not take very long and he anticipates the position needing less dedicated hours as he progresses. However, there is a lot of organizing and general maintenance that needs to be done within the department before he reaches this point.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00pm

Steve Seddon

Alex Bowman