

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board Work Session held on Thursday, July 21, 2022 at 1:00PM at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, Alex Bowman, John Field, Jonathan Sylbert

Called to order at 1:00PM

Agenda: Discuss Special Town Meeting

1.) Adoption of MGL title 7 Chapter 40U- Section 12 - Attaching citations to properties as liens

Adoption of this MGL would give citation more authority and encourage residents to conform to the bylaws. Jonathan will confirm with Town Counsel what portion of the Chapter will need to be adopted.

2.) MGL Chapter 60 Section 62-65 - Tax payment agreements and title taking procedures

This is a financial policy recommended by DLS in 2017 that cannot be adopted by the Select Board, but must go to Town Meeting. The Select Board agrees to bring this to the Special Town Meeting. Jonathan will confirm the wording with Town Counsel.

3.) MGL Chapter 40 Section 5b - Legally adopt Capital Planning Stabilization Fund

Jonathan reports that even though the Capital Stabilization Fund wasn't legally adopted at Town Meeting, since it was approved by the town, they may not need to bring it back to Town Meeting. This will be confirmed with Town Counsel. Steve recommends reaching out to Linda Bradley at DLS, who noted they would offer the DLS legal team for any financial matters for free.

4.) MGL Chapter 41 Section 106b - Creation of Capital Planning Committee

Jonathan notes that most towns do not have this committee, and instead designate their Town Administrator/Manager for any Capital Plan tasks. He feels comfortable taking this on without the help of a committee, noting he has already started the process of compiling a list of all Fire/Police/DPW vehicles and equipment, their estimated cost of replacement, and service life.

Alex mentions that it may be beneficial to use as much volunteer assistance on this project as possible. Jonathan notes that once the Capital Plan is created, it would be up to the Finance Committee and Select Board to carry out the plan.

The Select Board agrees to exclude this item from the STM.

5.) Article to request the School Committee draft an amendment setting forth the terms of Sandisfield's withdrawal from the district

Steve reports the goal of this item is not to withdraw from the school district, but rather apply pressure that Sandisfield is serious about their involvement in the school. Previously, the Otis School Committee rejected a proposed amendment that would give the Sandisfield School Committee members a vote. In fact, they went so far as to disapprove of Steve's request to be on the agenda to formally present the amendment at all, which forced him to present it during public participation. Additionally, the Otis School Committee ignored the thoroughly researched data presented by the School Options Exploration Committee.

Alex agrees this appears to be the only option at this point. He notes that he believes Sandisfield would benefit from their own school, but understands that it is a much larger project that warrants a lot more time and effort. John also agrees to include this on the warrant.

Steve reports Carl Nett will work on the wording for this Article. Steve notes that the School accounts for half of Sandisfield's budget, meaning that when Otis increases their budget by a certain amount, Sandisfield goes over its levy. This may result in Sandisfield being forced to cut services.

6.) Town manager bylaw proposal. Discussion needed on the 2017 document and other points of reference if needed.

Jonathan reviews briefly the Town Manager bylaws from other towns. He notes that one of the big things to think about is whether the Town Manager will oversee the Police/Fire Department or if that will be the responsibility of the Select Board. Alex and Steve are in favor of the Town Manager taking on that responsibility, for it makes the operation for all departments the same.

Alex notes he supports making the Town Manager responsible for all appointments, managing, hiring, firing and annual reviews. The Town Manager must still come before the Select Board for approval.

Removal of Town Manager seemed pretty standard across all the other town's bylaws. A severance package would still be negotiated with every Town Manager. Most town's designated

the Town Manager position as a three year term. Jonathan suggests not including a term, but rather allow the term to be negotiated in the contract.

7.) New/Used DPW Truck

Steve supports the purchase of a new truck, noting they aren't overly expensive. Brad will pursue some options, but the Select Board should confirm whether they are considering putting this on the warrant.

8.) Library Roof & DPW Septic

The funds for the library roof replacement have been encumbered. Funds have been encumbered for a septic plan only, for Brad could not get a definite cost of replacement before the fiscal year ended. It's noted the DPW may have the rest of the required funds in their budget, but it cannot yet be determined.

9.) Audit Board of Assessors Department/ Reassess all properties

Steve notes the Select Board and Board of Assessors need to re-examine where the town stands with their assessments, for there are multiple renovations/new construction that have failed to file for permits. Should the town find it necessary to hire Mayflower while searching for a new Principal Assessor, they may need to re-evaluate the Assessor budget. Another option may be to hire their own Assessors to assess properties, which would require getting bids for these companies. Steve notes that compensating their current Board of Assessors to assess properties may be another idea to consider.

10.) Consider Borrowing

Jonathan will monitor the borrowing atmosphere and interest rates. It's noted that borrowing is a required ballot question, and the deadline to submit has passed. However, it can be included on the ballot in the November election.

11.) Planning Board's Proposed Bylaws

The Select Board must reach out to the Planning Board to request status of their proposed bylaws, and confirm whether any can be included on the STM warrant. Should the Planning Board choose to include any bylaws, they must hold a Public Hearing.

12.) Grant Writer

Steve suggests considering whether the town should create a budget to hire a grant writer. Jonathan reports that in Monterey there was concern whether a grant writer was worth the money, for their own staff were capable of receiving grants on their own.

Meeting adjourned at 2:13PM.

Steve Seddon

Alex Bowman

John Field