

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board Work Session held on Friday, February 17, 2023 at 2:00PM at the Town Hall, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

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

1. Review Entire FY24 Budget

Jonathan reviews all the Special Articles, each article will utilize Free Cash, General Stabilization, Capital Stabilization, or Ambulance Stabilization.

Currently, there is a little over \$179,000 increase to the operating budget. This increase includes the \$130,000 increase to the School's budget. Jonathan recommends moving the School out of the operating budget in the future, as it will make the town's expenses more transparent.

As of yet, no changes have been made to the Transfer Station budget. However, other haulers are being looked into as the price with the current hauler has increased significantly.

Facilities maintenance needs to be addressed. Steve believes the following to be some of the biggest projects, general maintenance and gutter work estimated to cost \$20,000 at the Library, storm windows and a new roof & chimney estimated to cost \$58,500 at Old Town Hall, motion sensor lights at Town Hall for \$4,500, and finally, another \$4,500 for all building maintenance, including septic pumping, furnace services, etc. \$20,000 was already encumbered for the Library roof in FY22, which can be allocated towards the Old Town Hall roof instead, as it is in worse condition. \$5,000 is agreed to be added to Facilities Maintenance. Instead of hiring someone for the Facility Maintenance position, the salary line is increased to \$12,000 to hire contractors as needed.

The proposed DPW Foreman position will have to be approved by the DPW Union representative and a job description must be developed. \$4,000 is tentatively included in the budget for the position.

After a brief discussion about the Transfer Station Revolving Fund not supporting itself as a revolving fund, as it costs more to operate the dump than the stickers can pay for, the Select Board agrees to raise the cost of stickers to \$90 for one and \$10 for a household's one additional sticker. This cost increase will still not cover the operation of the Transfer Station, but is more reasonable to help offset the costs. \$35,000 will be appropriated for the Transfer Station.

The Police Department requested numerous significant stipend and salary increases, including an increase to \$72,000 for the Public Safety Officer. The Select Board

requests Jonathan speak with the PSO to see if she would accept this increase over a two year period, rather than all at once.

The Select Board is not agreeable to the 30% stipend increase request for the Police Chief, and agree to only approve the 3% COLA increase. The same is agreeable for the Fire Chief. The Select Board supports the Special Article for \$8,000 for EMS training, but they request something like a two year commitment to the town from the EMTs. The increase in hourly call rates from \$20.47 to \$25.00 and standby from \$56.86 to \$60.00 are approved.

Jonathan recommends the Select Board meet with the Cemetery Committee as they have not spent more than \$850 of their \$4,000 budget in three to four years and according to the website, have not held a meeting since December 2021. It's suggested the Select Board consider making the Cemetery Committee an elected three member committee. The Cemetery Committee will be invited to a Select Board meeting on February 27.

The Select Board will invite the Board of Assessors to their next meeting to discuss the BOA budget, board responsibilities, and the future of the department.

The Select Board budget will decrease. Stipends will remain the same at \$4,000 for two members and \$5,000 for the Chair, expenses will decrease from \$15,000 to \$6,000 and a new line for Printing/Mailing will be included for \$4,500.

Jonathan suggests changing the bylaw to make the Finance Committee an elected three member committee. Steve expresses concern that people won't want to put the effort into running for the position. The Board will discuss both options at the next Select Board meeting and will invite the Finance Committee to attend and voice their opinions.

The Council on Aging is level-funding, but the \$5,000 allocated for Elderly Transportation has been removed as Southern Berkshire Elderly Transportation is no longer in business. The COA is currently paying their independent elderly drivers out of their regular budget and grant.

The Recreation Committee has asked for an increase so they can advertise their events more effectively in hopes of generating more attendees. A Pig Roast will be put on the warrant as a special article. Yanner Park has level-funded, but also put in a capital request to build a pavilion.

The Select Board agrees to apply the 3% COLA increase across all the salaries. Specific positions will be revisited and adjusted as needed.

2. Review Capital Plan

3. Review Amortization Schedules Representing a Broadband Down Payment Against the State Sponsored Loan

Steve questioned whether they may want to put a downpayment on the broadband loan to save on the interest cost, as they will accumulate \$180,000 in interest by the time the loan is paid out. There is a discussion about the structure of the loan, interest rates, and whether allocating money to a downpayment is the most fiscally responsible thing to do.

The Select Board will review the Broadband contract and amendment and revisit the item during a Monday Select Board meeting.

4. Determine when to Close the ATM Warrant to Input or Petitions

The Annual Town Meeting warrant will be closed to input or petitions on April 1, 2023.

A motion was made, seconded and so voted to have John Field sign the payroll and vendor warrants on behalf of the Select Board on the week of the 20th of February.

Steve Seddon	Aye
Alex Bowman	Aye
John Field	Abstain

Meeting adjourned at 4:00pm.

Steve Seddon

Alex Bowman

John Field