

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board
January 5, 2022

Minutes for Select Board Work Session with Kevin Flynn held on Wednesday, January 5, 2022 at 6:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: George Riley, Alex Bowman, Steve Seddon, Kevin Flynn

Called to order at 6:00PM

1. Discuss Select Board goals and objectives for 2022

Alex begins the meeting by summarizing his ideas, which compare how things have operated in the past. He notes previously the town has not exhibited much oversight, accountability or transparency.

Alex proposes creating a better understanding whether Sandisfield truly benefits from what money is being put towards. He examples asking why Sandisfield's Accountant, who makes \$25,000/year, is being paid more than the Accountant in Otis.

Alex claims he does not want to "micromanage" employees, but rather set expectations, have employees buy into these expectations, and make sure the Select Board is keeping track of them. He would prefer to do this in an objective way, and have the employees and Kevin provide to the Select Board their prioritized tasks and why these tasks are important.

George agrees there cannot be accountability without measurement. He notes that to assist in this accountability, employee evaluations are conducted annually which allow employees to prove their agreed-upon goals have been fulfilled. George suggests conducting quarterly check-ins to assess how employees are achieving their goals. George would like to give employees the opportunity to take ownership of their jobs and determine their goals and how to achieve them.

Alex questions whether the town can get more out of their employees than just their routine tasks. He examples whether the Accountant should be conducting an analysis on the accounts and other town related finances, including the trends on specific line items.

George suggests one way to determine whether employees are making proper use of their time is through routine staff meetings where employees can update Kevin and the Select Board on what they've been working on.

Kevin notes he checks in with all Town Hall office employees everyday, regularly speaks with the librarian, Theresa Spohnholz, and Brad Curry makes a point to come in and give a daily DPW update. The Fire and Police Chiefs are the only ones he would like to make a point to hear from more often.

George questions whether it may be beneficial to change the Town Accountant from salary to hourly. He notes in the majority of situations, the town has to rely on the work ethic of its employees. Kevin suggests creating very specific expectations for employees. Alex agrees with establishing more effective project management, including more strict deadlines.

Alex moves on to his next point regarding the management of the DPW, and notes the superintendent, Brad Curry is overwhelmed with tasks, and states the department needs a secretary. Alex mentions that with all the other tasks the DPW has to handle, the roads get neglected. Many road issues are constantly being bandaged, rather than permanently repaired. Alex suggests the DPW create a project priority list and set weekly goals.

Steve notes he would like road work tracked better, including how much material is being used on certain roads and how often certain roads are in use. This information could assist in determining priority on roads, for there might be an emergency situation where a home cannot be accessed due to road conditions.

Alex reiterates that one of the goals of the Select Board is to conduct research on licenses and incentives to renegotiate the DPW Union Contract. The purpose of this renegotiation will be to motivate DPW employees to get licensed and work harder to better themselves in their field.

Alex also believes the Personnel Policy and Job Descriptions should be revisited and updated. He would also like the job descriptions for all employees to be uploaded to the website.

Steve would like to improve the town's bond rating, this will allow the town to borrow money for more big ticket items. In order to do this, performance procedural reviews for all employees will need to take place. This can be done during employee evaluations.

Steve suggests performing procedural reviews at the end of the fiscal year, especially for the new hires, and scheduling a complete audit for the following fiscal year.

Steve also requested a fixed asset list from all the departments, especially the DPW, Fire and Police departments. He notes it will be beneficial to the town to determine the status of the vehicles and if they're worth keeping them.

Steve mentions maintenance to buildings is not being done, and this is costing the town money, for they are using more energy than necessary for their operation. These buildings and their repairs need to be evaluated.

ARPA funds need to be delegated to certain projects, and Steve suggests spending the majority of these funds on the incoming high speed internet. He notes that Roger suggests using some of the funds on a consultant for the COA to discuss and assist with the elderly transportation. Steve suggests giving the guidance forms to other town departments and seeing if the money can be utilized anywhere else.

Steve notes that Brad has software that will help to determine how much a specific length of road usually costs. Add to this the money spent repairing particular roads and the number of days those roads are impassable annually due to mud/ washout, he believes there will be a better chance of approval for road funding grants, for it will create a sense of urgency.

Steve touches on the DPW Union Contract, noting that in order to pay the DPW employees more, there needs to be more accountability. He suggests putting GPS on all town vehicles.

Steve requests a briefing on all the rumors regarding the town, it's employees, and it's finances. This will prevent any false accusations being made and confusion about certain situations.

Kevin goes over his list of goals for 2022, including adopting the FY23 budget, review and update the personnel policies, create procurement guidance, update job descriptions, look into hiring an on-call plumber and electrician, evaluate and upgrade phone system/service, purchasing software and suggests Office365, complete asset inventory and assign lifetime to all items. In the future, Kevin would like to identify a location for municipal buildings/public safety complexes. Alex questions how progress on these goals will be tracked, Kevin explains a timeline will need to be created.

The Select Board briefly goes over vacant positions and suggests the possibility of one person being appointed to more than one position. Kevin states that he will interview with Janey Beardsley on Monday for the Administrative Assistant to the Select Board and Town Manager position.

Steve notes that the School Committee meeting may provide the Select Board with some crucial information regarding the budget. He also states that the Finance Committee wants to schedule a meeting with the Select Board to go over the FY23 budget.

Steve notes that during the School Committee meeting the amendment which would allow Sandisfield members a vote on agenda items, was essentially turned down by Otis members. It has not been officially voted on, but Otis members voiced their opinions and it is assumed they will vote it down should a vote occur. This is the exact reason the amendment was requested.

The Select Board plans to conduct quarterly check-ins with employees to see how they are coming on their goals. A preliminary meeting will need to be conducted to determine these goals. An annual employee evaluation will still be conducted and will determine employee bonuses.

Alex requests clarification on the definition of exceeding expectations. George states once goals are determined for each position, exceeding expectations can more easily be determined. Alex references that when only one of the three DPW employees received an exceeds expectations bonus, there was a question of favoritism because there was not a clear understanding of what constituted exceeding expectations.

Meeting adjourned at 7:52pm.

George Riley

Alex Bowman

Steve Seddon