

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board
January 18, 2022

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 7:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

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

Called to order at 7:00PM

- 1. Call to order: Note that the meeting is being recorded**
- 2. Review and sign minutes of meetings. Points to minutes**
- 3. Review and sign purchase orders**

4. Brad Curry in for DPW Updates

Brad updates he's been coordinating closely with MassDOT about resurfacing another mile of Route 57 from where they left off at the top of the hill to the bridge below the transfer station. Brad anticipates the project being successful, in which case MassDOT will conduct the culvert replacements, but the DPW may have to assist with cleaning up some of the road shoulders. They plan to also resurface some of the ditches to make the culverts more effective. A three mile section of Route 183 is also included in this project. Work on this is expected to begin as soon as the weather breaks, possibly May or June.

Brad had received some calls from residents on Dodd Road requesting the DPW make the road more accessible. Some maintenance and stone has been laid down, but it is now too cold to make any more progress. Alex questions how Brad prioritizes these types of projects, for he does not see the end of Dodd Road as a high priority. Brad explains this was a fill-in task, for they did not have materials, equipment or access to other more high priority items.

A temporary fix has been made to an eroding culvert on New Hartford Rd. Brad plans to look for Chapter 90 funding for a culvert lining to extend the culvert out farther and add a head wall.

Brad has spoken to several outside contractors about Town Hill Rd for subdrain work. He hopes the outside contractors can start this project while DPW employees begin road grading.

Brad requests recommendations from the Select Board for dirt roads that could use more material to be installed or otherwise be altered. He suggests prioritizing roads that get heavier traffic.

Two culverts on Sears Rd have holes in them. They have been fixed temporarily, but will need to be replaced in the spring. Brad will need to speak with the Conservation Commission to make sure the repairs are manageable.

Two culverts on Town Hill Rd appear to be collapsing. Brad would like to create a plan to repair or replace these culverts either this year or in 2023.

The state will be paving part of Tolland mountain as a part of an emergency evacuation route. Brad has been talking with the state in an attempt to convince them to go all the way down the mountain into Sandisfield. The extra paving would only be around 2-3/10s of a mile, and the engineers have already stated they feel they should repave the mountain in its entirety. Brad hopes to get confirmation on this plan as soon as possible.

As of Friday, 1/14 the DPW has used 150 tons of salt, and have since used more. The salt comes from two different vendors, for Brad has been trying to determine which vendor is more financially suitable for the town. Eastern Salt Company delivers quickly, but the salt is very fine and builds up in the sanders easily. George informs Brad that a decision was made that the DPW is not to use treated salt from New Boston going west for about a quarter of a mile due to residents' concerns of well contamination. Brad notes that for sand, the DPW has been using JLS and Hilltown. However, a new local vendor has proven better quality and price.

Brad updates the smaller 350 truck has cylinder problems, and he does not feel it is reasonable to put more money in to repair it, for there are other pre-existing issues as well. The mechanic told Brad the truck will run for now, but will eventually overheat and die. The grader is still inoperable on Hammertown Rd. The plow valve has rotted out of the 750 truck. This valve was replaced by the DPW crew. Upon conducting this repair it was discovered that a small part was causing a leak; a repair kit was received earlier today. The plug on the loader has been replaced. Routine maintenance has been done to the JCB. Brad notes these repairs are routine and expected during the winter months.

Brad updates he's looked into the purchase of a new plow truck. If he were to order one, it would not be available for 1.5-2 years. If they were to purchase a truck off of a lot, they would be spending more, but they would have it much sooner.

Brad has reserved a roller and a grader for May-July. He is also stockpiling stone in preparation for the upcoming mud season.

5. Discuss and appoint DPW employee

Brad introduces Thomas Pestritto, the applicant he'd like the Select Board to appoint. Thomas proved to be the most experienced and skilled applicant, Brad notes he does not have a Massachusetts hoisting license, but would be willing to get one. To acquire this license, Thomas will have to submit an application and take a test at Fort Devens. Brad suggests creating a three-month deadline to confirm a test date, and have nine

months to pass the test. Thomas has previously worked with Mass DOT and MassDEP. His work with the DEP has familiarized him with wetlands regulations.

George motions to appoint Thomas Pestritto as a DPW employee. Steve seconds. Motion passes unanimously.

6. Discuss and approve Special Town Meeting warrant

Kevin Flynn goes over a proposed addition to the Special Town Meeting warrant which would establish a bylaw that would better organize the job description, responsibilities, and requirements for the Town Manager position. Once Kevin finished reading the bylaw, he requested Select Board feedback.

George notes that upon a vacancy, appointing a screening committee may take more than 10 days. He examples the Select Board only meeting bi-weekly in July and August. Kevin suggests raising the 10 days to 21 days, George agrees. George also does not believe the moderator to be an appropriate choice for a screening committee member, for the moderator is not very active in town government.

It is noted that it will be important to go over Kevin's current contract with the town to determine if there are any conflicts between it and this proposed bylaw before including it on the warrant. George notes that he is in favor of a Town Manager bylaw in principle. He mentions that previous Town Manager candidates expressed concern that a future Select Board could decide a Town Manager is unnecessary. The addition of this bylaw would show that Sandisfield feels this position is important and essential to the town. Alex supports the bylaw, but would like to clarify what items should be included in the bylaws, and what could rather be considered policy items instead.

George states today is the deadline for sending in the warrant for Town Counsel review. While this draft is not quite ready, he does not believe it sensible to wait another week. Kevin suggests submitting the warrant without the Town Manager bylaw included for now.

Kevin briefly reviews all the current Articles. Alex asks if there are specific numbers for Article 5, George explains the Treasurer has been working on this, but has not submitted them yet. Kevin will write "TBD" in the meantime.

Roger Brown questions what their position is with the unbudgeted bill from the School District for \$18,679. Roger explains when the School budget was approved, it was assumed this bill was included, but due to a process change, it was not included nor approved by the town. Roger is unsure if it is definite whether Sandisfield needs to pay this bill, but suggests including it on the warrant just in case. Alex supports adding this as an Article on the warrant, and notes this money will only be utilized should the bill not get sorted out in another way.

George motions to add Article 7, which would see if Sandisfield will vote to transfer available funds to cover the sum of \$18,679 for vocational technical school tuition. Alex seconds. Motion passes unanimously. Kevin will make this revision and send the warrant to Town Counsel for review.

7. Town Manager Updates

Kevin has sent out a notice to all Town department heads that the all Town buildings will be closed until February 1, 2022 due to an increased COVID rate among Sandisfield Town officials. The notice is also posted on all doors and on the town website, notifying residents all business will be conducted via phone, mail, or the dropbox outside the Town Hall.

An all boards meeting via Zoom is scheduled for Thursday, 1/20, to go over the budget submission process and forms. The process is the same as it has been previously, with the addition of a roster of employees, which will include name, title, wage, and hours worked. All necessary forms and guidance will be available on the Select Board page on the town website.

Kevin goes over budget information, including revenue for the town and anticipated cost increases. The consumer cost index has risen from 1.5% to 5.5% in Sandisfield, and averages 7% nationally. Elderly residents will see a social security cost of living adjustment of 5.9%. Kevin requests all departments level service fund. A deadline for budget submission will be established at the meeting 1/20.

George questions whether the Select Board should establish a Salary Survey Committee to look at all town positions and find out what market rate for these positions is, and compare to Sandisfield's current wages. Kevin notes that finding comparable towns may take a significant amount of research. Alex mentions North Adams just received a \$20,000 grant to finance an analysis of city pay and benefits of all levels and compare it to similar cities and towns.

8. Select Board Updates

George updates he received a drafted HCA for Berkshire Mountain Cannabis from Jonathan Silverstein. George will review the draft and respond shortly.

Kevin updates the Board of Health was unable to acquire any at-home COVID tests for the town. It is noted there is a federal program that provides four tests to each household. The form is online and very simple to fill out. There is an additional method to acquire these tests, which includes reimbursement from an individual's health insurance after purchase.

The Planning Board's meeting to discuss the cannabis bylaws went well. A Public Hearing for these proposed bylaws is scheduled for February 24 at 7:00pm. An

additional Public Hearing for proposed zoning bylaws is scheduled for March 9 at 7:00pm. Both hearings will be located at the Old Town Hall.

9. Future agenda items

George would like to move forward with the Salary Survey Committee.

Stevens notes he's been looking into the status of the town buildings and repairs/updates that can be made. He will share this information with the Select Board. George notes there has never been a plan on these types of proactive repairs.

Kevin confirms scheduling a meeting with the Board of Health, the Nursing Alliance and the Council on Aging for Monday, January 31 at 6:00pm.

George mentions there have been two COVID exposures in Town Hall. These employees will work remotely for five days.

10. Review mail

11. Review and sign warrants

12. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours in advance of the meeting

Meeting adjourned at 9:24pm.

George Riley

Alex Bowman

Steve Seddon