

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board
March 30, 2022

Minutes for Select Board Work Session with the Finance Committee held on Wednesday, March 30, 2022 at 7:00p.m. at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: George Riley, Alex Bowman, Steve Seddon, Jonathan Sylbert, Roger Brown, Larry Dwyer

1. Discuss FY23 budget planning

The Select Board briefly discusses the transition from Kevin Flynn's budget to Jonathan Sylbert's budget, which included moving some accounts under new headers in the chart of accounts and establishing recurring and nonrecurring sections. Missing details were also filled in.

An increase in Select Board salaries is discussed. George Riley notes that since he is running unopposed for re-election to the Select Board, it would be the opportune time to request a stipend increase. In the past, Select Board members did not want voters to use the raise request as a reason not to vote for them. It's also noted that the Select Board has dedicated an increased amount of time and effort into the town this fiscal year. George suggests increasing the stipend from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Steve Seddon reports he is not interested in increasing the stipend, but suggests the possibility of only increasing it for the Chair, for they take on more responsibilities. The Select Board agrees to raise the stipend from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for the Select Board Chair only.

Stipends for other boards/committees are discussed. Larry Dwyer suggests giving every committee member a stipend of \$500. A list of all the boards/committees will need to be collected, and then a request for input should be requested.

Jonathan suggests doing an audit every three years if they prove successful. If not, an audit should be done every year. Should Sandisfield not conduct an audit, it puts the town at risk.

Jonathan runs through the special articles for the budget:

\$84,765 - Highway Engineering

\$152,717.60 - Roller

\$397,000 - Grader

\$90,000 - Dump truck

\$600,000 - Pump truck, Steve will confirm if this include the additional accessories

\$10,000 - Town Manager "Headhunter," Jonathan notes that the Select Board should allow the town to decide whether they will utilize this search method. This will prevent residents from questioning why the search hadn't been conducted more professionally.

Jonathan explains that in 1972-73, Chapter 32B was adopted which meant any town employee who retired was entitled to health insurance if they paid 100% of it. Section 9A of 32B is the local option which allows the local town or municipality to split this cost 50-50. Many surrounding towns have adopted this section. In order to adopt this, a Health and Retirement Stabilization fund needs to be established. The Select Board expresses concerns with the expense this will have on the town. Steve suggests the possibility of increasing pay rates, rather than take this route, for he expects it will still equate to less money down the road. Jonathan proposes including the section adoption under employee benefits, and would be awarded based on seniority.

Maintenance of town buildings is discussed, including the installation of exterior lights, new windows, and re-paving of the driveway at the Town Hall. It's decided that a consultant fee for engineering or planning for these projects can come out of the Highway budget, the Operations, Maintenance & Repair budget line is suggested.

Jonathan reports the prior year balance for overlay surplus is \$371,185, the current outstanding balance is \$380,000.

George states he agrees with the Highway Engineering expense. He also agrees with the purchase of the grader. Steve suggests paying for the roller out of free cash and borrowing for the grader, which will be about \$33,000 in debt service annually for five years.

Roger Brown reports that Broadband will cost \$862,680. Steve notes ARPA funds can be utilized for this expense. Using ARPA to lower the cost of Broadband would simultaneously lower the interest if the town paid using the cherry sheets, which would accumulate \$250,000 in interest over 15 years if the full amount was paid.

The \$90,000 for the dump truck would be paid out of free cash. The purchase of a fire truck is discussed. George suggests purchasing a used truck for much cheaper since Sandsfield put very little miles on their fire trucks annually. Roger suggests setting aside money annually in capital stabilization dedicated to reaching the price of a new fire truck.

Roger also notes there is a \$200,000 Ambulance revolving account, and suggests some of these funds be contributed to the purchase of a fire truck. A discussion about this revolving account is had. George suggests using this account to pay for expenses, like EMT salaries, or getting rid of the account and putting the money into capital stabilization. A plan is proposed to set aside half of the money required for a new fire truck contingent on the establishment of a strategic plan for the Fire Department.

The conversation returns to payment for Broadband. George believes that the cost for the project needs to be paid down in order to lower the interest rate and reduce the term. He notes that ARPA may be the best solution. Roger recommends paying the entirety of the project out of capital stabilization. Alex Bowman questions whether they can reach out to DLS for an extension of the project to determine the best way to

finance Broadband. He expresses concern that should they pay for Broadband in full, they may miss grant opportunities to finance the project. A letter will be sent from the town's attorney to DLS requesting for an extension of the Broadband project beyond the final completion date to July 2, 2022.

The Select Board does not know whether it would be cost effective to purchase another DPW dump truck, for there are already enough trucks per employee.

Meeting adjourned at 8:26pm.

George Riley

Alex Bowman

Steve Seddon