

Town of Sandisfield

Select Board

Minutes for Select Board meeting held on Wednesday, August 31, 2022 at 10:00AM at the Town Hall Annex, 66 Sandisfield Road, Sandisfield, MA

Members present: Steve Seddon, John Field, Alex Bowman by remote, Barbara Cormier, Joanne Olson, Rita Kasky, Jonathan Sylbert

1. Interview with Jonathan Sylbert for Town Manager position

Jonathan Sylbert has been working as interim Town Manager in Sandisfield for almost six months now. He reports that over the last few months there has been significant improvement, and he believes Sandisfield is almost out of the cleanup stage. Specific opportunities Jonathan would like to see Sandisfield take advantage of include updates to the library, creating a business district, promoting businesses, and aiding zoning issues.

Steve asks what aspect of Jonathan's time as Interim Town Manager he's found to be the most difficult, and how he's dealt with it. Jonathan notes staffing is an issue in any town; not only finding employees who are dependable and easy to work with, but also planning for potential vacancies to assure the town remains functioning at its regular capacity.

Jonathan's top priorities as Town Manager would be establishing the direction Sandisfield would like to take and creation of Town Charter. A Town Charter would lay out the responsibilities of departments/boards/committees. Jonathan measures success intangibly as commendation from other municipalities and townspeople, and tangibly through balanced budgets and goal fulfillment.

One of the larger deficiencies within Sandisfield is the communication between the financial officials. Jonathan believes it's important all these departments function on the same level. Just as well, Sandisfield needs to keep up with the ever-changing needs of the town.

Jonathan is very detail oriented and likes to know exactly how a situation came to be. That being said, he finds his management style to be more relaxed, making sure his employees do not feel an overwhelming amount of pressure, feel comfortable, and given the opportunity to solve their own problems. Creating clear goals for all employees individually and as a team is important.

The places Jonathan's been most involved with thus far are the same places that still need attention: Fire, EMT, Police, DPW, Transfer Station. These departments tend to take priority on the day-to-day, for they receive the most attention from the residents.

Steve asks if Jonathan has a five-year plan for his time in Sandisfield. Jonathan notes that the work is never done, and there is always something that can be improved. However, his hope is to get Sandisfield to a point that when he leaves nothing changes because he's helped establish how each department will move forward and operate.

Alex asks how Jonathan would go about investigating the viability of a residential tax exemption. Jonathan notes that he has been watching how other municipalities have been dealing with this, and the Sandisfield Principal Assessor has already done the legwork in town. However, the marginal gain is very minimal right now. Jonathan believes the idea is important because it allows affordable real estate taxes for residents, while allowing the town to profit off second home-owners.

Meeting adjourned at 10:56am.

Steve Seddon

Alex Bowman

John Field