

SUNDERLAND SELECTBOARD MINUTES

Place: Sunderland Town Offices, 12 School Street

April 3, 2023

Attending: T. Fydenkevez, C. Drake-Tremblay, N. Waring, G. Kravitz

Others present: C. Bennett, Rep. N. Blais, Legislative Assistant C. Coryat, L. Starr, K. McFarland, P. Gagarin, G. Gottschalk, J. Corwin, S. Triolo, K. Umstot (online), Ann M. (online)

Meeting Hybrid and In-person with portions recorded by FCAT

Meeting called to order at 6:32PM

MINUTES

Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to accept MINUTES of 03/27 /2023, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.

BUSINESS

Legislative Update with Representative Natalie Blais.

Rep. Blais noted her interest in visiting towns each year to update on what she has been participating on and discuss town priorities. She has introduced 39 bills this session. She remains on the Ways and Means Committee, Transportation Committee, Tourism, Arts and Cultural Development Committee and Vice Chair of new Joint Committee on Agriculture with Senator Comerford. The Agriculture Committee used to be part of Environmental Resources. Mr. Waring stated that school funding was needed as well as for transportation – not just in our districts. Mr. Fydenkevez stated when Mass Highway jobs are done in town, more communication is needed as a higher priority. Towns aren't included until the late in the process such as with projects such as the intersection in the center of our town. School Choice funds back to towns have not changed. 65-68% of smaller town budgets goes towards education; state funding formula of 70% is steep for towns in western mass. It is easier to get funding for school in the east because they have groups advocating for schools and staff dedicated to grant writing and other funding opportunities. Smaller towns do not have that available and staff are struggling to be competitive. Mr. Kravitz asked if there was any information on the municipal authority bill? He also expressed non-support for mandatory remote meetings due to costs and training not attainable in smaller towns. Ms. Blais noted that the Secretary of Economic Development is from the Berkshires and believes that will have an impactful presence in many areas. They have been working to provide grant workshops for smaller communities to allow for more competitive applications for grant funding. The next workshop is May 21, 2023 information will be forward to towns. They have also been working with area Community Colleges to develop more municipal interest for future employees. Rep Blais was the rural School Commission Chair for rural school aid and increase funds for non-residents. School Choice needs attention across the state as it is no longer working as intended. She also wants to review Chapter 70. Remote options are still available to testify at the hearings. Mr. Waring mentioned the need for affordable housing especially for young families who move out of the apartments then to other affordable communities. Rep. Blais also noted health care assistance was being reviewed and a new roads program where Rep Blais and Sen. Comerford made sure rural community needs were part of the distribution. The Board thanked Rep Blais for all her work on behalf of the towns and for attending their meeting.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

- CERTIFIED FREE CASH has been received for \$770,000. The updated budget spreadsheet does not include Free Cash yet. He reviewed some updates including the 65% Health Insurance town coverage. Two additional positions were included for 1) part-time General Resource office support in the Town Office Building for 16 hrs./week. Job description is not finalized. 2) full-time Building Maintenance position under the supervision of the Highway Superintendent. Various duties could include park restroom attendance, trash removal with replacement of receptacles at the field, building maintenance items. Job description needs to be prepared. A \$260,000 budget gap remains. Mr. Waring noted a \$30,000 GRANT AWARD AT THE SCHOOL which would help offset the BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STAFF POSITION requested. ACCOUNTANT position in Town Offices would be approximately \$80,000 with \$25,000 in expenses related to software, which would need to change. The

Accountant's last day is Wednesday. Mr. Kravitz working with the FRCOG for plan for remainder of the year but no plan offered yet. July 1st we will be on our own. An RFP will be prepared for FY24; has Plan B ready to go and Plan C for new fiscal year.

- WARRANT REVIEW- article numbers have changed. Line items were reviewed noting changes: increase in Town Admin. Salary, Treasurer Collector payroll clerk increase but working same hours; change in Town Clerk salary, town buildings energy expense increase, PSC energy and supplies increases and increase to expense account for deferred maintenance needs. No big change in PD budget except to increase Police Clerk by four additional hours. Town Inspections requested a very part-time permit coordinator which will be posted, expense increase is for Code Books which have been on order for some time. Highway expense increase and fuel increase; Health and Sanitation increase for small stipend for each agent.
- Mr. Fydenkevez noted support for Insurance Advisory Committee recommendation of 65% in Health Insurance employer share. Also supports staff position in Town Office Building.
- CAPITAL ARTICLE 4:
- ARTICLE 3 - Budget: Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to include, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- Article 4 -Regular Capital: Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to include with regular funds, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- Article 5 – Proposition 2 ½ override for capital stabilization. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to include, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- Article 6 – Capital budget contingent on passage of Proposition 2 ½. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to include, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- ARPA – SCHOOL OIL TANK. Another engineering quote received was \$2,000 less than Tighe & Bond quote. Other company did not visit the site and based quote on Tighe & Bond's prior work. Superintendent Modestow supports award to Tighe & Bond based on knowledge of their prior work, the project and property which included extensive review for the quote. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to appropriate \$29,800 for SES SOIL TANK ENGINEERING to utilize and award to Tighe & Bond for fuel tank replacement, design and permit, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0.
- ARPA REQUEST – ACCOUNTANT POSITION CONTINGENCY. Mr. Kravitz requested use of ARPA funds not to exceed \$25,000 if Accountant position not satisfied by FRCOG through end of fiscal year. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to authorize ARPA funds up to \$25,000 for accounting services contingency if required to hire an outside firm for end of fiscal year accounting services, Mr. Waring second vote 3-0.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

- Ms. Drake-Tremblay no reports. Mr. Waring no reports.
- Mr. Fydenkevez attended a Finance Committee meeting in Deerfield where a budget vote was taken limiting where SCEMS could provide services. Their Finance Committee reduced SCEMS budget. Sunderland has not been notified of this budget change. Request Town Administrator contact Deerfield Town Administrator for information on matter. Deerfield also notified SCEMS they could not go to SWAT as their insurance does not cover it.
- VILLAGE CENTER COMMITTEE has begun visioning study with ARPA funds.
- Riverside Park Restrooms work has begun and expect to be completed by end of month.

Next Selectboard meeting is scheduled for April 10, 2023.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to adjourn, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0 at 8:25PM .

Respectfully submitted,



Geoff Kravitz,
Town Administrator