

Sunderland Selectboard
Monday, April 5, 2021

Attending: D. Pierce, T. Fydenkevez, S. Bergeron, G. Kravitz

Finance Committee: L. Forget

Others present: Rep. Blais, Z. Smith, K. Nylander, R. Stafursky, S. Reed, M. Fournier, K. Bezanson, A. Tatro, G. Neswald, M. Kurland, P. Gagarin, T. McMann, B. Bouricius, G. Gottschalk, H. Gavioli, M. SM, Peggy, Carolyn, Elliot, 413-***-481

Meeting via Zoom recorded by FCAT.

Meeting called to order at 6:33PM.

MINUTES

Mr. Bergeron motion to approve Selectboard minutes of March 29, 2021, Mr. Pierce second, vote 2-0.

BUSINESS

SOUTH COUNTY EMS BUDGET PRESENTATION: Mr. Smith presented the SCEMS budget for FY22. He noted that SCEMS employees are employees of the Town of Deerfield and the direction from Deerfield was for no COLA this year, so the 3% personnel increase was due to steps and 1% for those who are at the top step. There was a decrease in Deerfield administrative costs, which is continuing to be refined. The total cost to run the organization is \$1,432,844. Fees and retained earnings were \$835,401, leaving an assessment to the towns of \$597,443. Sunderland's portion (approximately 31.5%) would be \$188,056. Mr. Smith stated that retained earnings grows annually and then is used for major equipment purchases, such as a new ambulance, when needed. Mr. Fydenkevez stated that although the town pays an assessment, it is a fee-for-service and people pay for the use of the ambulance. The director is working on a policy to deal with debt from uncollectable fees.

ELECTION WARRANT: The Election Warrant was signed and will be posted online and at the Town Office Building, Sunderland Public Library, and Sunderland Post Office.

COVID-19 UPDATE: There will likely be 8 cases in the next state report. There are also two Sunderland Elementary Students who tested positive. The BOH is in touch with school administration and there is no evidence of spread within the school. Residents were reminded to remain vigilant.

BUDGET UPDATE: The town's estimated local receipts for FY22 is \$662,600. Mr. Bergeron stated that free cash is around \$400,000, which is lower than anticipated because of uncollected taxes. This is low for a \$9 million budget and the town should strive to maintain a healthy balance in free cash. New growth is still unknown, but hopefully will be available next week.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

Mr. Bergeron stated that negotiations with the Police Union continued. The conversations have been constructive and respectful. Both sides are working toward common ground for a new 3-year agreement. Neither party offered policy proposals and the Selectboard would be updated on the proposals in more detail during the executive session. Mr. Fydenkevez recommended those still seeking vaccination to look at the Greenfield clinic, CVS, the vaxfinder website and the FRCOG website. People 55+ are eligible today and there is a clinic at the Kringle Candle Company in Bernardston this week. The towns are also preparing for a drive through clinic in South County.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

The town has received a Housing Choice Community Capital Grant to replace the storm drain between Warner Drive and School Street. Street sweeping is planned for April 20-22. Plans are underway for a Memorial Day Ceremony similar to last year. The Town Administrator also spoke about the North Main Street Reconstruction plan and the efforts to protect the trees within the tree belt. There has been concern that tree protection efforts may not be adequate. The plan calls for work to begin in May. With regard to the Buttonball Tree, the sidewalk will move further from the trunk of the tree and raise it to minimize root impact. The town will continue to work with the contractor, MassDOT, and the arborists engaged in the project to ensure that the trees are not harmed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Bouricius, an arborist, reviewed the tree report of the trees along North Main Street prepared by town-hired arborist and he generally agreed with the report. He voiced concern over the excavator that was mistakenly placed

near the Buttonball Tree. There are only 3 comparable trees in the entire Northeast and the one in Sunderland is in particularly good health compared to the other two. Ms. Neswald asked if the entire grassy area could be cordoned off to prevent cars from stopping there. Mr. Fournier advised to stay vigilant and oversee the work being done to prevent tree damage. He also advised regular monitoring the Norway Maple trees and to plant a wider variety of trees in the future. Ms. Bezanson, also an arborist, noted that it only takes a few minutes for heavy equipment to damage tree roots. She requested fencing signs identifying tree protection zones, and the use of air and hand tools to remove the sidewalk to limit the impact on roots. Ms. Bezanson also voiced concern about the removal of topsoil and how that could impact fine feeder roots. She referenced Northampton's Tree Preservation Guidelines as a good model. Mr. Fydenkevez asked that the Buttonball be fully enclosed with fencing and include signage.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mr. Bergeron motion to adjourn to two consecutive executive sessions pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) paragraph 2: To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel and MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21 (a) paragraph 3: To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the chair so declares, Mr. Fydenkevez second, roll call vote. Mr. Bergeron: aye; Mr. Fydenkevez: aye; Mr. Pierce: aye.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Bergeron motion to adjourn at 8:50 PM, Mr. Fydenkevez second, vote 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Kravitz', written over a horizontal line.

Geoff Kravitz, Town Administrator