

SUNDERLAND SELECTBOARD MINUTES

Place: Sunderland Town Offices, 12 School Street

March 18, 2024

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

Others: C. Bennett; Peter Gagarin, Jessica Skibiski, Jess Corwin

Absent: D. Murphy

Meeting Hybrid and In-person with portions recorded by FCAT

Meeting called to order at 6:31PM

MINUTES

Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to approve MINUTES of 03.12.2024, Mr. Waring second, vote 2-0.

BUSINESS

- **ACCOUNTING CONTRACT RENEWAL:** Mr. Kravitz said the accounting contract with Aponte & Aponte is up for renewal. Cost increase is \$200/month totaling an additional \$2,400 for the year. The overall Accountant budget line would decrease due to “catch up” work performed during transition is completed and prior software license can be eliminated. We were obligated to pay for entire fiscal year for the prior software. The new software program is much less expensive. Mr. Kravitz noted the accounting practices have been moving smoothly. Mr. Waring noted the Free Cash certification last year was received much earlier than prior vendor.
- **E&D REQUEST FROM FRONTIER:** E&D Funds (Excess and Deficiency) represent funds that were budgeted but not spent. Frontier is requesting reallocation of funds to address equipment needs and replacement of the fire panel. Mr. Waring noted this was discussed at a Capital Planning Committee also and has no issue with the request. Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to allow Frontier to use E&D Funds as described, Mr. Waring second, vote 2-0.
- **MOWING BIDS:** Mr. Kravitz requested clarification of definition of electric equipment use for mowing bids and percentage threshold for the equipment usage. The board recognized that smaller equipment is easier to change out vs. mowers which is more costly to incorporate in a fleet. This may affect the cost of the bid than with other mowing contracts. For each 10% of the bidder’s equipment that is electric, their bid can be 1% above the lowest all-gas bid, up to 100% electric / 10% over the base bid.
- **DITCHES:** Discussion on what needs to be considered with ditches and cleanout. An easement would be needed from all property owners because the ditches are on private property and not town-owned property. The town does not currently have the proper equipment to do this type of work. Property owners could be asked to donate ditch land for easement purposes. Issues would continue if all property owners do not maintain the ditch area on their property. Board requests how many properties are affected and how to identify them. To be placed on a future agenda.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Jessica Skibiski spoke about recent PICKLEBALL COURT plans in Amherst being halted and moving to a different location due to neighbor concerns of the noise. Does Sunderland have anything in place to address noise from the pickleball courts planned to be installed behind the town offices? Were abutter’s notified and can they be contacted for comments before construction begins. Mr. Kravitz noted that abutters were contacted when the project was proposed and no one expressed concerns or had comments. Abutter radius is usually 300’. Ms. Skibiski felt the proposed location would be disruptive to library outdoor events and other activities the town holds at Riverside Park. Baseball and other sports currently take place on the fields that include cheering, etc. without abutter complaints. A higher fence was discussed for the courts but would not reduce noise. Courts would be open for use anytime. Ms. Skibiski requests a noise study be conducted before construction starts, decibels and number of feet to property lines. Can any other soundproofing be done with pavement, etc.? The town does not have a lot of options to relocate since this Selectboard Minutes

side of the river does not have enough buffer zone to the river and a school location would be disruptive to the students and other activities.

OLD BUSINESS

- **OPERATING BUDGET REVIEW:** Mr. Kravitz noted the latest version includes the Elementary School Budget and 30% free cash which is \$141,300. A \$240,000 gap remains. He recommend some areas to review is the new police officer request, library extended hours and health insurance premiums which has an 8% increase, not including the town's 2.5% increased contribution.. SoCEMS is planning to submit a revised budget. Mr. Waring suggesting eliminating the police officer position due to it not being a level service request. Health insurance coverage currently has no deductible and if a deductible is added, there could be a 5.5% reduction in cost to the town and members. Suggested town should look into other plans and request the MIIA rep attend next meeting at 7:00PM to discuss options, but ultimately decided that everything else would be looked at before making changes to health insurance. Board also requested information on why building utility and fuels costs vary greatly from building to building. Mr. Gagarin spoke about the historical budgeting and budget funding distribution options. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE is recommending a 3% COLA for town employees. They are also recommending, instead of the current stipend, for employees with 10 or more years of service to receive a one-time adjustment of 2% in addition to the COLA for FY25. PERSONNEL COMMITTEE is reviewing paid FMLA as requested.

SELECTBOARD UPDATES

Mr. Waring had no reports. Ms. Drake-Tremblay said SoCEMS meeting was rescheduled to next week.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR UPDATES

- ATM WARRANT ARTICLES are due this Friday.

Next Selectboard meeting Tues. March 26, 2024, 6:30PM.

ADJOURNMENT: Ms. Drake-Tremblay motion to adjourn, Mr. Waring second, vote 3-0 at 8:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Geoff Kravitz,
Town Administrator