Present: D. Sampson, M. Miller, B. George, S. Hoctor, C. Holden  
        G. Dunham, Town Manager; Heather Harper, Assistant Town Manager  
Others Present: W. Jennings  

Mr. Miller opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.  

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE  

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
Mr. Holden moved to approve the minutes of 1/6/2022 and 1/13/2022. Seconded by Mr. Sampson. Approved unanimously.  

PUBLIC COMMENT  

Mr. David Darling – Read a statement about his property taxes. He said he received the highest property tax bill in his life. The Town Manager is presenting a 9.24% increase in the budget, and this is not for the schools. His assessment went up 9.1%. He thinks the Town should relieve the people who have lived here. More property to tax would allow the tax burden to shift.  

Ms. Laura Wing – Wants to talk about people in town being very upset about high increases in taxes, but clutches of people are experiencing a very high increase. Her taxes went up 31%. This is challenging and difficult. She has talked with Bill Jennings and the Director of Assessing and was told that there were increases on Salt Marsh Rd. and that there might be a similar increase next year. She doesn’t question the legality; other towns are having the same issue. Beachfront residents are not here in the winter. Last year three properties fell over and were removed from the beach. Two of the three properties got taxes increased without a house on them.  

TOWN MANAGER REPORT  

Before the report, Mr. Miller asked Mr. Dunham to clarify and explain the tax increases. He provided a video explanation of how taxes are determined. Every city and town follow the same process. Tax rates are determined by what is approved by the public at Town Meeting divided by the total assessed valuation of properties in the Town. Amounts approved include budgets, overrides or debt exclusions, and assessment by the Cape Cod Commission. The tax levy can grow only 2.5% over the previous year’s taxes plus an amount for new growth. Sandwich’s last override was in 2006. Only one other town – Barnstable – has not had an override recently; the average is four in the same amount of time. Exclusions usually are due to debt approved by voters; the most recent debt exclusion was to finance the police and fire buildings. Others have related to needed work at the schools. Debt exclusions are taxed until the debt is paid, then
they disappear from taxes. Additionally, the Town can approve a one-year capital exclusion to finance a specific project. Total valuation is determined by prior property sales. Towns have neighborhoods that reflect similar values however some areas have more value than others. Then the state approves the numbers, and the tax rate is set. As valuations increase the tax rate decreases, but values of specific houses in some areas might go up. Everything goes by state law. A property owner has 30 days to file for an abatement if the owner believes the value is wrong. The Town can only raise money that Town Meeting has voted and no more. If one’s property value goes up above the average property value in Town, then the taxes go up slightly; if the property value decreases below the average, the taxes might go down slightly. The average tax bill is $6,547. Mr. Sampson stated that values reflect what has gone on with the real estate market. Mr. Miller reminded the public about abatement. The Town’s total valuation is determined by assessing parcels and analyzing related sales data.

1. Meetings: The Finance Committee meets on February 1st; they will receive the budget presentation. Next Thursday Dr. Gould will come before the Board and before the Finance Committee meeting the following Tuesday. A rough schedule has been developed for presentations.

2. Emergency management is looking at the storm situation closely. It will meet again tomorrow. The transfer station will be closed on Saturday; a decision on Sunday will be made later. This has all been publicized on the Town website. Town Neck beach gate will be locked tomorrow.

3. Wastewater – there have been several meetings with Converge. We are trying to see if the system has merit for Sandwich. We will apply for a regional state grant with Barnstable to look at the amount of effluent expansion. The State DEP is supportive. The grant has a maximum of $200,000. We reached out to Mashpee, Falmouth and Bourne; Mashpee and Falmouth are interested.

Mr. Miller asked whether the DPW is short of plow drivers. Mr. Dunham said there are 15 drivers plus a few from the transfer station and other departments. More than a third are out related to Covid but are back now. We are asking people to avoid parking on streets. It is possible there will be a shelter at the human services building; this will be determined by the County.

CORRESPONDENCE/STATEMENTS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Holden received a letter from a citizen discussing the decommissioning of the nuclear plant and the effect from wastewater going into the Bay. There is a letter from our congressional representatives, and he asked if the Board would consider supporting the letter. This will be put on the agenda for next Thursday. Mr. Hoctor spoke with the offices of Senators Warren and Markey regarding the Section 111. They talked with the Army Corps about expanding the amount of the federal award beyond $12.5 million. He brought up Old Harbor, which is a burden on the Town. A Waterway infrastructure funding vehicle is possible. They want to see two disposal options – the salt marsh and town neck. Mr. Miller reported that the school negotiation team needs someone from the Board to be involved with that process; Mr. Holden will do it.
STAFF MEETING

Town Manager and Other Town Staff – FY ’23 Budget Presentation and Related Issues

Mr. Dunham addressed the FY ’23 budget and long-term issues using a slide show presentation (slides are available in the agenda packet). Before he went into detail, he made two major points: 1. The recommended general government budget increase is 9.24% over last year, and 2. The capital budget request at $300,000 is net of monies from ambulance and enterprise funds, as well as reflecting capital approvals at the fall town meeting. Additional capital items to consider include school department building improvements, which would need to be funded through a debt exclusion and improvements to the Sandwich Hollows Golf Club, funds coming from the golf enterprise fund. Mr. Dunham then presented charts and information about the sources of funds and the spending patterns, along with identifying overall long-term trends and opportunities and went over the specific sections of the budget binder (available online at www.sandwichmass.org).

He specifically addressed the capital budget, highlighting the recurring amount needed for building maintenance, addressing school building needs and costs for moving the school administration to the human services building as well as transferring money for golf course improvements. He talked about the advantageous timing for the golf course improvements related to increased play and how deterioration would continue should the improvements not be made. He is awaiting firm figures for the school improvements.

When addressing the operating budget, he emphasized that a level service budget would result in a 4.98% increase due to costs associated with wages, additional buildings, personnel related to moving into 100 Rte. 6A, opening the Hoxie House and Grist Mill, and addressing reorganizational opportunities; he provided detailed information related to all of these. The difference between the level service budget and the recommended 9.24% budget are due to shifting of funds from road infrastructure funding through debt exclusions to including enough in the DPW budget to ensure adequate road maintenance and prevention ($650,000).

Additionally, the recommendation is to include Fire Department overtime expenses in the Fire Department operating budget; this will eliminate annual requests for transfers from the Reserve Fund to cover these expenses ($250,000 with $100,000 to come from the Ambulance Fund). This makes the operating budgets more realistic and sustainable for the future, while still maintaining both a balanced budget and excess levy capacity.

Mr. Dunham then talked about needs to be addressed in FY’24 and beyond, which included additional staff, sale of buildings with sales revenue put into the sinking fund and decreasing operating budget dependence on beach parking for the Recreation and Natural Resources departments. He addressed the increasing tuition assessments by the State and the pressure this puts on the operating budget, projected general fund revenues and expenses, and described issues to monitor during the budget process.

Mr. Sampson commented that significant effort has gone into this. Variables are important, particularly concerning the roads. He is concerned about disconnected information presented on social media and encourages voters to watch meetings or read the newspaper. The last debt
exclusion for road improvements passed at Town meeting and at the ballot box, but there is not enough money in the DPW to keep up; this needs to be funded. Mr. Miller commented that although the Town passed the bond, the amount was nowhere near enough to catch up with what had not been done for years. State money hasn’t kept up either.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Current Building Projects
100 Rte. 6A – high capacity file systems are going in today. Great news that the sewer ejection pump has been commissioned. Working with APC and other vendors for the dehumidification. We are waiting for an accurate cost estimate to move forward. Good progress. The exterior work will be done in the spring; move in possibly in early May. Mr. Sampson would like to see a more definite date. Drew Landry, an intern from Mass. Maritime is working on inventory of surplus cabinets and items that would be left behind after the move that we would like to sell or auction off. He has been attending meetings and the hope is he will be involved with local government. CAL – national grid is working on the gas line. Framing, exterior trim, platforms and trusses for the second floor, and the roofers are onsite. Hopefully the stairs will be completed and the second floor will be more accessible. Work on finishes and furnishings continues. Meeting with recreation leadership and human services department who are collaborating on policies and youth policies for the building. Within the next six weeks there will be a draft policy that will be brought back to the Board. There might be some activities the community will want that won’t be available because of staffing; managed and programmatic activities will be covered well. Mr. Miller thinks there should be an open house when 100 Rte. 6A is finished and ready to go; that will be planned.

Barnstable County ARPA Funds
Met with the County Administrator and Jim Killion, Sandwich’s representative to the Assembly of Delegates to inform them what Sandwich would want to do with the funds. Mr. Dunham read a statement that reiterated the request for the return of the funds to the towns and goals for use of the funds, including for Town and probably regional wastewater infrastructure issues. We are looking for a quick decision so we can begin planning. Mr. Miller would like a letter sent so our request is on the record. There is possible indicator of agreement between the Assembly and the Commission about the distribution of funds. It is going to take a while to be distributed and expended and we want to make plans as soon as possible.

Disposition of Deacon Eldred House, 4 Water Street
Ms. Harper began by recognizing all who have participated in making recommendations. The goal is rehabilitation and perpetual care of the building as a historic building. The Town retains the right of first refusal with an in perpetuity deed rider to repurchase the home. The recommendations propose that the property not transfer until approval for repairs by Massachusetts Historic Preservation has been received. The performance bond will not be released until the certificate of occupancy is acquired. She also addressed needed qualifications of the proposer. Additional aspects include that any renovations must meet historic preservation standards; the Town has right of access for repairs to Town structures and for other Town activities; and it must be open to the public at least twice a year. The primary use is
to be residential. The RFP will include these plus septic, archeological, and marketing considerations. Ms. Harper presented a proposed timeline beginning today and going until mid-March; we want it to be done as quickly as possible. A preservation consultant has reviewed the proposal and will provide additional assistance. The exterior has to be consistent with historic preservation, including any additions; the interior can be modern.

Mr. Sampson moved that, pursuant to G.L. c. 40, § 3 and G.L. c. 30B, §16, (a), and the Vote of Article 23 of the 2011 Annual Town Meeting, we hereby vote that we have determined that the parcel of land with the building thereon, known as the “Deacon Eldred House,” located at 4 Water Street, Sandwich (the “Premises”), described in the Order of Taking recorded with Barnstable County Registry of Deeds in Book 1933, Page 151, containing .89 acres and shown on Assessor’s Map 73 as Lot 154, is available for sale pursuant to the terms of a Request for Proposals which we authorize to issue, in which the Town requests proposals from qualified proposers to purchase the Premises and to rehabilitate, renovate and preserve the Premises subject to the following conditions:

1. Any rehabilitation and/or restoration of the building shall be done in strict compliance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Structures and complies with the Preservation Restriction Agreement recorded with Massachusetts Historical Commission recorded with Barnstable County Registry of Deeds in Book 11621, Page 310;

2. A grant from the successful proposer for public access to the historic building at least twice a year is required, the nature and extent of the public access to be negotiated with the successful proposer;

3. A grant of a permanent access easement to the Town over a portion of the Premises on the northerly side for repairs to the town’s infrastructure; and

4. The Town’s right of first refusal to purchase the Premises at any time in the future in the event the owner receives an offer to purchase the Premises from an unrelated bona fide purchaser.

5. Although not required the Town will request a permanent easement be granted to the Town for access over a portion of the land by the general public to access Lower Shawme Pond for boating, picnicking and other recreational purposes, the location and terms of which are negotiable.

Seconded by Mr. Holden. Approved unanimously.

Other Matters Not Reasonably Anticipated for Old Business
None.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommended Appointments
Barnstable County Human Rights Advisory Commission – Lou Cerrone. This is a multi-year appointment and Mr. Cerrone has been associated with this for a while. Mr. Sampson said he believes the letter is confusing and he has reservations because of a partisanship demonstrated by the applicant. This needs more research and information about what the Commission does.
Sandwich Cultural Council – Peter Fondulas with Residency Clarification. He is moving out of town and is currently a member of the Cultural Council. There is nothing in State law restricting him from serving if he is not a resident. The Cultural Council is in agreement. Mr. Hecor moved to move forward with Peter Fondulas as a member of the Cultural Council Mr. George seconded. Approved unanimously.

Proclamation of April 29, 2022 as Arbor Day
The proclamation would like the Selectmen to declare April 29 as Arbor Day. We usually plant a tree with the School. Mr. Sampson moved to proclaim April 29, 2022, as Arbor Day in the Town of Sandwich. Mr. Holden seconded. Approved unanimously.

Other Matters Not Reasonably Anticipated for new Business
None.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Laura Wing – Spoke about having done some research. Abatements are due Feb 1. For a cluster of beach houses, Salt Marsh is a small neighborhood relative to others. She said that a small neighborhood would not meet the required sales numbers for comparison. There were only 2 sales in 2020; the assessors were allowed to go to 2021, which had 3 sales. There was a jump in prices in 2020 and more in 2021. If both years were used the assessed value would be higher. Her question is are we distributing the tax burden among all residents, or are some being hit higher? Mr. Miller recommends she go for an abatement. The Assessors are very strict on what they will accept for an abatement; all properties in Ms. Wing’s neighborhood will be high, so there is no anomaly.

CLOSING REMARKS
Mr. George is concerned about the coming storm. Some sandbags have been distributed. A resident reported spending $80,000 last week. White Cap Path and Bay Beach areas are devastated. How much can people take living on the beach when the Conservation Commission refuses to let them use the Elco Rock? It was acceptable in Carlton Shores. He would like to see the Board go to the Conservation Commission to support the use of Elco Rock and to encourage them to work with these people by loosening the restrictions. Other Towns are subsidizing this type of activity. He doesn’t want the Board to sit there and do nothing. Mr. Sampson responded that he thought there was something about the Elco Rock that was more complicated, and we need to get the facts; he thought it was the Commonwealth that was the issue, not the Conservation Commission. Mr. George responded that there is a clay bottom in that area. The Town was supposed to hire a non-biased person to look at the situation; the Town hired Woods Hole who he considered to be biased. Mr. Miller commented that the people who are affected by this lost a first decision and now are appealing to the Conservation Commission; he believes one Town Board should not be telling another Town Board what to do. Mr. Sampson has advised people who have been complaining about the Conservation Commission to write letters and attend meetings to change the direction of the Conservation Commission, but he hasn’t seen any. Mr. Hecor asked if we have a catastrophic issue, do we get an emergency permit to dig? Mr. Dunham responded that the classification of a dune or barrier beach makes a difference as to what can be done there.
Mr. Sampson requests to use the public safety text message system to notify residents how to get help if needed in the storm and to advise residents to keep off the roads.  
Mr. Holden is impressed at the amount of financial information we get from the administrative staff; we are fortunate to have them. Thanks. Mr. Miller reminded everyone that all of the information is online on Town Website.

Stay home Saturday and Sunday.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sampson moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Holden seconded Approved unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:45PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan James

Supporting Documents:
Minutes (9 pages)
Budget Presentation (49)
Appointments (8 pages)
Arbor Day (1 page)