

Town of Sandisfield
Select Board Executive Session

Minutes for the Select Board Meeting held on Monday, October 27, 2025 at 6:00pm via zoom.

Members Present Remotely: Steve Seddon, Robert Fedell, John Field, Janey Snyder

Remote Participants: Laurie McArthur (SB Secretary), Mike Morrison, Steve Johnson, Esq., Attorney Andrew Gambaccini, Zachary Nato, Brian Maser

1. Motion to enter Open Session

2. Motion to enter Executive Session under G.L. c. 30A, sec. 21(a)(1) - To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. Not to return to Open Session.

The meeting is being recorded. Steve Seddon, Select Board Chair for the Town of Sandisfield, opened the executive session. This Executive Session is being conducted pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 30A section 21(a)(1) to discuss whether to discipline or discharge Chief Morrison from Town employment based upon the findings made in the investigation report issued by Attorney Johnson. The Board previously discussed and accepted the findings issued in Attorney Johnson's report at our meeting on October 20, 2025. Both Mr. Morrison and his attorney Andrew Gambaccini were present for the hearing. Tonight's meeting was schedule to provide Mr. Morrison an opportunity to speak.

Chief Morrison and his attorney, Andrew Gambaccini are present for this Executive session. Both parties received a copy of KP Law's investigation report. We will begin by hearing from Chief Morrison in response to the findings in the investigation report. Thereafter, the Board will have an opportunity to ask questions of Chief Morrison. From here the Chief will be allowed to invite any third-party individuals to address the Board and provide any information relevant to the matter. This will not be a direct examination of third-party individuals, but rather offering an opportunity to speak on the investigation report itself. At the close of each individual's comments, the Board will have an opportunity to ask questions. Once the Board has heard from any third-party participants, they will allow Chief Morrison and Attorney Johnson the opportunity to offer any closing comments.

The Board deliberated and will vote on whether to discipline or discharge Chief Morrison from Town employment based upon the findings in the report and Chief Morrison's comments this evening. As an alternative to imposing discipline, the Board may vote to close the investigation without taking any action against the chief.

Chief Morrison was now provided with the opportunity to speak.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that Mike Morrison should not be in front of the Board in this disciplinary setting. Attorney Gambaccini reported that Mr. Morrison will be 69 years old next month and has contributed to the Town as both a volunteer and employee for over 50 years. He worked towards promotions of lieutenant, captain, and eventually became the Deputy Fire Chief. Mike dually served the Town as a police officer, beginning in the 1980s, and was promoted to the Police Chief in the mid-1980s. Attorney Gambaccini reported that owing to special legislation that applies to Sandisfield and Town employees Mike will be required to retire when he turns 70 next year. Attorney Gambaccini denied any legal reasons and argued that the Town should allow Mr. Morrison to finish out his term and retire next year.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that the Town does not have a Town charter. Special legislation was passed in 2023, entitled "An act creating the offices of the Select Board and Town Manager in the Town of Sandisfield".

This legislation lays out the duties and governmental structure in the Town. Section 2ci indicates that the Town Manager is the Chief Administrative officer, and Section Qdi outlines that the Town has the authority to appoint and remove Town Department Heads in compliance with a succeeding subsection. Subsection two, directs the Town Manager consult with the appropriate Board or Committee and the Select Board prior to removal of Department Heads. Attorney Gambaccini reported that only the Town Manager has the legal authority to remove Mr. Morrison from his position.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that they have been working on an investigation on their end, arguing that the Town should have conducted a more in-depth investigation. He reported that the majority of the concerns relate to three-hour minimum compensation pay for fire and ambulance calls. Attorney Gambaccini reported that per the letter written by Mike Grillo wrote that records indicated that members of the fire department were putting in for three-hour increments per call, despite there no contractual provision calling for that agreement. There is no contract for this three-hour agreement, but reported that it is in the Town records.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that his office reached out to the former Town Clerk, Dolores Harasyko, about the issue. He said that for years no one was compensated other than the fire chief. Years ago, members began to be compensated, and thereafter the three-hour limit was created. Per Attorney Gambaccini, the former Town Clerk, volunteered to make an appointment to come in and gather this information. Attorney Gambaccini noted that per the investigatory report, meeting votes and Select Board minutes were not reviewed.

Secondly, Attorney Gambaccini reported that not all calls are routed through Berkshire County Communication Call logs, thus resulting in flaws and limitations in the provided report. Some calls come directly through police or fire private phone lines and are not recorded on the dispatch report. The run reports were not provided or reviewed during the investigation. Said reports were provided to the prior Fire Department Administrative Assistant, John Burrows. It was reported that no one spoke with John about the reports. Attorney Gambaccini reported that there was a discrepancy between the BCCC call logs and the run reports. In July 2024, BCCC has a record of four calls, whereas the run report has 15 responses from the fire department in addition to ambulance responses. Per a conversation with Don Trion, Director of BCCC, who reported that call logs are not reliable with respect to personnel tracking.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that police call logs report when the officer was dispatched, arrived, and cleared the scene, but does not record the time required to write the report. He said that in regards to the Fire/EMS call logs do not account for the time to clean up, wrap hoses, clean the ambulance, or refueling. Attorney Gambaccini expressed concerns that this information was not in the report.

Finally, Attorney Gambaccini reported that Chief Grillo filed his complaint on the heels of Chief Morrison filing his complaint with the Town about Chief Grillo related to whistleblowing and retaliation. No interviews were conducted. The report outlined that Mike Morrison would submit fire department time sheets to John Burrows, which, per Attorney Gambaccini was inaccurate. Material was provided to John, and he prepared payroll records, which then went to Fire Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, or other appropriate parties for signatures and review.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that Fire Department members (Mike Morrison and Mary Bredenfoerder) responded to police department calls. This was due to them being hybrid calls. Mike

acted in the role of Police Chief and Deputy Fire Chief, and Mary, being the Public Safety Officer, can respond as either a police officer or an EMT. The BCCC separates out Fire and Police calls; however, the BCCC may separate their calls in a different manner.

Attorney Gambaccini discussed a July 1, 2024 event where there were three incident hours logged under the fire department for payment for three different units responding. There were also three EMT hours associated with that day. He reported that they are relying on call logs vs run reports. He reported that another call required Mary to be in the back of the ambulance to treat the patient, while Mike drove the ambulance. Attorney Gambaccini reported that in the report that there was concern that both parties were compensated for the three-hour minimum for this call. It was reported that there was one call where Mary was only compensated for one-hour, which shows there was no three-hour minimum. Attorney Gambaccini reported that in conversations with Mary, she may be compensated at the fire department rate upon the end of her shift. He said that her time would be compensated under the Fire Department category past the end of her shift.

Attorney Gambaccini discussed one scenario outlining payment for seven hours on calls over three hours. The policy of the Town is a three-hour minimum of compensation. However, when a call requires a member stay over three hours, they are then paid for the time spent working. The call-in question is for a road closure, lasting seven hours.

Page six of the investigatory report, discusses double or triple entries into the system. When multiple calls occur in a single day that do not overlap, the three-hour minimum compensation policy can be triggered multiple times as long as there is no overlap in the calls.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that for all of the reasons discussed there is no reason for any further inquiry, and the matter should be closed out tonight. However, if the Board feels otherwise, then a more thorough investigation should be conducted.

Steve asked if either of the Board members had questions for Mr. Morrison's attorney. John asked if they had a copy of the three-hour minimum policy. Attorney Gambaccini reported that he did not, but reported that the former Town Clerk, Dolores, recalled the policy, and it was reported that it was in her folders and files.

John reported that in a Select Board meeting it was discussed to look into having a policy or increasing pay; however, the existence of a current policy was never brought up.

Bob reported that the invoice for the batteries for the ambulance triggered this, and the company hired to replace the batteries had completed the work and charged for labor; however, it was reported that employees were compensated for installing the batteries.

Mike reported that First Due Services supplied and installed the batteries, and John Burrows had misspoken regarding employees having installed the batteries. Alec and Shamus were paid for repairing an electrical issue on the ambulance.

Attorney Gambaccini reported that he had a written statement from John Burrows regarding the situation. Per a statement from John Burrows, Attorney Gambaccini reported that Deputy Fire Chief Mike Morrison does not authorize or submit payroll or purchase orders for the Fire Department, and acknowledged his (John's) error on the PO stating that two employees were paid for installing the batteries. Per the report, John stated that he shared this information with Chief Mike Grillo.

Steve opened up the floor for third party comments. There were none. Steve opened up the floor for closing comments from Chief Morrison.

Mike Morrison reported that he has never been solely in charge of the Fire Department, and reported that payroll was completed by the Fire Department Administrative Assistant based on call logs received, and submitted to the Town Treasurer. Michael reported that both the administrative assistant and the Town Manager signed payroll prior to it being submitted to the payroll company.

Mike reported that BCCC dispatch logs are not accurate, due to not factoring in work that must be completed after a call is cleared. Mike discussed all of the cleanup and paperwork required after both ambulance and fire calls, which was not factored into the dispatch and clear times outlined by BCCC.

Mike reported that KP Law does not possess all of the information, and reported that the three-hour minimum requirement had been in place for many years, has been utilized in determining payroll, and has been discussed at a Select Board Meeting. Mike expressed concerns that inaccurate information was assumed, and reported that the Fire Administrative Assistant was responsible for payroll and lacked input from Mike.

Mike reported that the three-hour limit was standard operating procedures, outlining that he was on-call 24/7 most days, while PSO Bredenfoerder responded to calls for a minimum of 40 hours per week due to her being full-time. Chief Morrison reported that sometimes the Fire Department members may be required on Police calls due to lifting assistance, and may be called out via phone due to the radios being out of service. Mike reported that the three-hour minimum pay requirement was in place for many years, and per Mike it has been discussed at previous budget meetings. Chief Morrison expressed his concerns that the investigation was not thorough enough and lacked sufficient information.

Steve offered Town Counsel, Attorney Johnson, the opportunity to provide any final comments. Attorney Johnson reported that he and his colleague Deborah Ecker conducted the investigation and drafted the report that the Board voted to accept on October 20, 2025. Attorney Johnson reported that Fire/EMS members consistently received three-hour minimum call hours for calls that took significantly less time. This included Mr. Morrison. Attorney Johnson said that in his view Mr. Morrison has not provided any concrete evidence that there was ever a contractual provision for minimum call hours. Payroll practices were overall concerning.

Attorney Johnson reported that he was informed by Fire Chief Grillo that the BCCC call logs are accurate and members should only be paid for calls outlined in those logs. It was Attorney Johnson's recommendation that the Board vote to discharge Mr. Morrison's employment with the Town.

A motion was made, seconded, and so voted to discharge Chief Morrison from Town employment in all respects based upon the findings made in the investigation report.

Steve Seddon	Aye
Robert Fedell	Recuse
John Field	Aye

Brian Maser with KP Law, reported that Attorney Gambaccini accurately communicated that the Town Manager by the passage of the act is the granting authority for the Fire Chief. Therefore, any vote taken is solely advising the Town Manager of what the Board's opinions are.

Janey reminded Brian that this hearing was for the police chief, not the fire chief, and wanted to make sure there was no difference since he was considered a strong chief. Brian said that Janey, as Town Manager would still be the granting authority.

Bob asked if a stipend can be paid in a non-emergency situation, such as for cleaning the ambulance, and asked if this would fall upon Mike Morrison's input or general practices. Bob said he felt the need

to recuse himself for this reason. Mike reported that he has minimal input regarding what was submitted for payroll. Mike said that the time sheets have been in place for years and signed by both the Board and Town Managers.

3. Adjourn Executive Session

A motion was made, seconded, and so voted to exit Executive Session.

Steve Seddon	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye
John Field	Aye

4. Adjourn the Meeting

A motion was made, seconded, and so voted to adjourn the meeting.

Steve Seddon	Aye
Robert Fedell	Aye
John Field	Aye

Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.

Steve Seddon

John Field

Robert Fedell