November 14, 2018

Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday, November 14, 2018 beginning at 6:33 p.m. in Conference Room #1 in Town Hall.

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

Members present: Eric Gregoire, Chairman, Maureen Downing, Joan Cavallo, Richard Moskal, Raymond Yando, Anthony Alves and Beverly Tokarz

Members excused: Heidi Fogg and Susanne Boyea

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

At this time the committee met with Jodi Zepke, Director of the Senior Center, to discuss the issues with one of her vans. There is a fourteen passenger/wheel chair van. There are 147,000 miles on it and unfortunately for the past two years there have been major issues with the van. The van now needs an engine and other parts. The first price was $10,000. The mechanic did some research and then told her that it couldn't be repaired. He said he wouldn't take on the liability of fixing it because he can't find the right type of motor that had less than 70,000 miles on it. Now there are major transportation issues. They have a nine passenger/wheel chair van that they are using but it only holds one-wheel chair and they have another twelve-passenger van with no lift. They must turn people away because of the unavailability of the van. They transport forty-seven people who must use the lift. They put on at least 100 miles a day on the big van. Another reason she was going to approach the Capital Improvement Committee is there is a huge electrical issue with the big van. She didn't think the motor would go, it was the electrical issue that she was concerned about.

Mr. Moskal wanted to know who did the analysis? Ms. Zepke said Roy's Towing on Boston Road did the analysis. They have worked on the van for years. She has one opinion currently. The issue in repairing the van is that most garages cannot handle it because of its size. The grant program took care of the smaller van. There are no grants for the larger van. The committee feels that there is a liability issue because of the electrical problem.

Ms. Zepke investigated renting a van, but those vans are not rented out. She's been working with MHQ who they normally get their vans though. The company researched if there were any vans to trade. Mr. Gregoire explained the Capital requests and payments that has a five-year life span and is over $25,000. Town Meeting must approve the purchase. Other groups also must sign off on the purchase.

Ms. Downing said that she believes Ms. Zepke will need to meet with the Selectmen, look for guidance, meet with Capital Improvements and go from there. The committee is certainly willing to help her out, but she would need to start with the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Gregoire said that she should meet with Ms. Villano to circle back and find what her options would be, present them to the Selectmen and have them find a way for a purchase or other options. There were questions from the audience as to why a new van couldn't be purchased from monies that are put aside for emergency issues. Ms. Downing said that if the van was a repair, the committee could sign off on it. Mr. Gregoire said that unplanned service contracts in any way that cause an overage in operations, anything for repairs in a facility i.e. a boiler repair to overtime and other activity in personnel that's changed within the year that needs supplementing outside of what

was planned in the budget is what the money can be used for. The Board of Selectmen would have to enter into an agreement to purchase, lease etc. the van, not the Council on Aging.

Mr. Moskal said that he is very involved in the Senior Center. He feels that two appraisals are needed, not just one in writing for repairs. He is prepared to have the Mercedes company look over the van at no charge, but he wants to make sure that he is not in any gratuitous situation with Mercedes and the Town, so he will check with Ms. Villano.

At this time the committee met with Chief Madera and Sgt. Shameklis to discuss their request to lease tasers. He received approval at Town Meeting to enter in to a five-year lease. He is looking to get the money for the first-year lease, because he doesn't have any money for this piece of equipment. Three years ago, he purchased fifteen tasers for $28,000. He rotates the equipment, but they should not be rotated because of excessive wear. It's an electronic control weapon. They are what officers use if they find themselves in a dangerous situation and can't control somebody. They can only use the taser when they have active resistant individuals who are fighting with the police officers. The Chief provided background and quotes to the committee. They have not added any monies to their general expense account over the last four or five years. There is no money to expand the program. The equipment is showing it's wear and tear because it's being tested every day by three and four officers. The tasers are battery operated. The batteries wear down. Other reasons, accountability, documentation reports etc. which is done by computer and then it's reported to the State who reports it to the Federal government. They need to expand the use of the tasers or continue to do rotations. His goal is to have enough units for the patrol and supervisors to rotate. The X2 is still a viable unit and can still be purchased and are still under a 60-month plan. You pay for 60 months and they would own the unit. It's a yearly cost. Town Meeting approved the 60 months but did not have a quote. The Chief outlined the new and old technology for the committee. The new technology is very expensive. For 40 units of the X2 tasers is $91,000, 30 units is $68,000 and 20 units is $60,000. He is asking for a 1-year payment; replace the tasers that they have and add to them.

Mr. Moskal wanted to know the difference between the old and new technology. Sgt. Shameklis explained the difference. It has to do with the cartridges. The old ones have two cartridges and the new tasers have one cartridge. The batteries have been upgraded. The old batteries cannot be recharged, and the new ones can. The software is also updated etc. Ms. Collins feels that the Chief should wait until the budget process to deal with his situation. Ms. Downing feels that it would be better to purchase the new tasers with the new technology. Sgt. Shameklis said that you don't want to mix the two different systems. They are completely different. There won't be any savings. The beauty with the Taser60 is that everything is covered under the five-year lease program. The Chief has the approval of Town Meeting to enter into a five-year agreement, the committee feels that his budget should be discussed and then if needed give him the funds for this issue. There needs to be a line item in the budget so that the Contract can be approved. No matter what he must write the Contracts; they need approval from the Selectmen's Office. If a line item is set up in this year's budget, then the funding will be there for the next five years etc. He will have to wait until May for the funds. If there is an emergency, then he can come back to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Gregoire gave an update on the FY'20 budget plan. Ms. Collins said that the Budget Sub-Committee hasn't met to date. Ms. Villano gave her a Charter for the Sub-Committee which puts out a Charge and Scope of Responsibilities and things that should be identified during the process, such as tax rate, levy capacity, free cash, debt service and capital projects, operational budgets and putting forth fiscal goals. She said that the Free Cash is 1 million dollars, the Tax Rate is finalized at $19.82 which is an $.81 increase. For capital projects there are only 2 leases left for the coming year; the ambulance for $58,000 which is covered by the Ambulance Subscription Fund and $77,000 for a Sander/Salter. For the budget, her plan is to have all the departments give her their salary spreadsheets to get them into MUNIS and give the Budget Sub-Committee a Level 1 Budget. Once the committee reviews it and comes up with the parameters then it will go to the Board of Selectmen. Instead of new reports in Excel, it will be MUNIS reports for a Level 1 Budget and Level 2 Budget and then the Finance Committee will review it and give recommendations from there. The 1 million dollars is certified Free Cash. She knows that there is talk about giving some of that money towards a track behind the High School. Mr. Gregoire said that there is a group in Town that has been talking with the School Committee and they made a presentation to the Board of Selectmen. The facility has been in existence for over seventeen years without being resurfaced. Ms. Collins said that the thought process is maybe putting a couple hundred thousand aside for them and having them raise the remainder of the funds. The group say they have corporations, but the group is wondering how much the Town is going to give them.

Ms. Cavallo said that it should be the opposite way the expenses from last year being so high. Ms. Downing said that there is a broken-down van with one wheelchair and the school budget etc. She feels the people can go out and raise funds and then maybe the DPW can help them. She doesn't think the Town should be putting aside any money. Ms. Cavallo said to look and see what the Town has spent and where we stand. Mr. Gregoire said there hasn't been a proposal made. Ms. Downing said that everything is a possibility, but there must be priority or people start thinking that there is money earmarked.

The committee discussed the DPW and if they hired a new director. They have not. Mr. Batista is the interim director. The position has been posted.

Moved by Ms. Downing, seconded by Mr. Moskal to approve the Finance Committee Minutes of September 19, 2018
Vote: 6-0-1 in favor. Mr. Alves abstained

There will be no meeting in December unless there is a need to meet.

Moved by Ms. Downing, seconded by Mr. Yando to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 8:15 p.m.
Vote: 7-0 in favor

Ludlow Finance Committee

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