April 1, 2020

Finance Committee Budget Meeting held on Wednesday, April 1, 2020, beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Selectmen's Conference Room, Ludlow Town Hall.

Because of the COVID-19 Impact, be advised that by Order of the Governor suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L.c.30A. Sec. 20 which limits public access; this meeting can be viewed via cable television as this meeting is broadcast live. Questions can be directed to the committee via email at questions@ludlow.ma.us.

Members present by Roll Call: Maureen Downing, yes; Susanne Boyea, yes; Joan Cavallo, yes; Richard Moskal, yes; Anthony Alves, yes; Nicole Parker, yes; Beverly Tokarz, yes; Eric Gregoire, yes

Ms. Collins and Ms. Villano were also on call.

Members excused: Raymond Yando

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Gregoire informed the committee that there will be three departments meeting to discuss their budgets. He asked the committee that if anyone viewing the meeting on the television or cable, that they mute the television and also mute the telephone until asking a question to reduce background noise. Please ask to be recognized and state your name before speaking. Any votes will be taken by a Roll Call.

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Mr. Justin Larivee met with the committee to discuss the Building Departments budget.

His budget Level 2 subcommittee recommendations totals $234,478. There are other items noted for personnel request that value $41,000.

Mr. Larivee said he is requesting that the personnel budget include a part-tine inspector, working 19 hrs. weekly with no benefits. There would be revenues generated from permits that would basically cover his salary. The revenues would generate $32,000. This position is needed if the Building Inspectors position is combined with a Facilities Manager position. He would oversee all the maintenance within the Town buildings. Ms. Downing asked what his salary would be without the Facilities Manager - $81,660. The $96,508 is with the new position. Ms. Parker asked exactly what buildings would he reside over? He said the entire Town including the schools. There is no Facilities Manager. Ms. Villano oversees all the expenditures in the buildings. Every building has maintenance personnel. Different companies are used for repairs, which is handled by managers of the buildings. Ms. Villano administers the budget for repair and maintenance, procurements etc. Town departments have to contact her to take care of repairs and maintenance. Ms. Cincone is in charge of transportations, maintenance of the school buildings etc. She has an individual who helps out with maintenance of the buildings. Ms. Collins asked if the positions are combined, would he oversee the maintenance of the school? Mr. Larivee said he would not oversee the custodian staff. He would take care of the exterior and mechanical systems of the school, licenses, plumbing leaks etc. Day to day custodial work would not be his

responsibility. This position would take over the work that is done by Ms. Villano and Ms. Cincone. He would put together all the bid specks and Ms. Villano would send them out to bid.

Ms. Downing had questions about the increase in percentage of the $96,500 over the current year. She said it's over 21% instead of the 19%. Ms. Collins said the current budget is $81,099. How much dollar wise over the 3% is the raise. Ms. Collins gets 19%. There was much discussion on this issue. They figured it out to be 19%. Ms. Parker also had questions on percentages. She feels that a Facilities Manager is important to have throughout the entire Town, but shouldn't be someone who had a full-time job already. He is already taxed. She also feels that more studies need to be done. She does not recommend the increase of responsibilities at this time. In the future maybe, but not at this time. She likes the looks of the Level 2 budget except for the new positions. Mr. Downing asked what the feeling was on the added position. Mr. Gregoire asked for a summary and where it stands through an H.R and Selectmen review. Mr. Larivee said he hasn't met with the Selectmen. Speaking with the Chairman and a few other members, they are for the position. Mr. Gregoire asked about the revenue that would be generated with a new part-time position. Mr. Larivee said the part-time position is to oversee facilities as needed. He would do all the onsite inspections to allow for annual inspections to be completed. During the slow time in winter, he would be starting the multi-family inspections, which would generate $32,162 in projections for the first year. That position was on the books but not filled. He had that position when he first took the job. It hasn't been funded for 12-13 years. Part-time would not have to pay a benefit package. He gave reasons why a full time Facilities Manager would be very costly as compared to adding to his position. Ms. Villano said there was research done. They checked with other communities, some have their own manager, some are combined. A job description was put together by the Superintendent and herself before bringing it before the H.R. Manager. Ms. Collins asked about the H.R. support. Mr. Larivee said that H.R. was in support of the position after the reviews. Ms. Collins asked about the increase in revenues. There is no money coming in because he doesn't have the time to do the inspections. The part-timer could do the multi-family inspections that would generate the revenues. The inspections are not being completed. These are annual inspections on multi-family buildings. There are 250-325 multi-family buildings in Town. Mr. Gregoire would like Mr. Larivee to map out revenues generated from inspections, old and new construction. Ms. Parker asked if it's in the bylaw to inspect multi family units. Mr. Larivee said it's in the Building Codes.

General Expenses: The largest line item is in Other Professional Services. It's for the property tracking software, the tablets and contracts for the plumbing and electrical inspectors. They are contracted from the Town for three years. They do not receive benefits. Mr. Alves asked if their salaries are the same every year. Mr. Larivee said it's based on inspections and how many they complete. This year they have the school and senior center and commercial building. It will be a busy inspection year.

Vehicle Repair and Maintenance: He had to replace tires on the truck which cost $6-800.00 expenditure.

Mr. Gregoire thanked Mr. Larivee and if there is any other information that needs to be shared, he welcomes that.

At this time the committee met with Ms. Zepke, Director of the Council on Aging to discuss their budget.

For FY'21 budget bottom line based on the work of the Budget Sub-committee is $432,480 which is a slight reduction from her original request.

Personnel Services: There are no changes. The entire staff is Union.

General Expenses: She doesn't know what will happen when they enter the new building. Half year will be in the new building and half year is in the old building. She increased the food supply, office supplies etc. Mr., Gregoire said there will be a lot of building related expenses that will be in the budget line items that Ms. Villano oversees. She doesn't for see any additional expenses. Mr. Alves asked about the large reduction to the Vehicle Repair and Maintenance. Ms. Zepke said it was the Sub-committee that reduced it. It concerns them, but she said that they could probably borrow from other line items to cover any unexpected expenses. There is savings because of not serving meals or driving the vans. Ms. Downing thanked Ms. Zepke for doing an excellent job as usual. She has no problems with her budget, but it may have to be revised when the new Center opens. Ms. Parker thanked her for services that she provides. She wanted to make the public aware that no meals are being made. Contact Greater Senior Services. They are looking for volunteers. Ms. Zepke said that WestMass Eldercare are also serving meals. Ms. Zepke said that she will be starting a Grab and Go Program, twice a week. Ms. Collins asked about driving the meals to homes. She said that Ludlow home delivered meals are under the WestMass Eldercare. She added 50 Senior Center caseloads. Most of the delivered meals are happening within the housing. Their Grab and Go program will be on Tuesdays and Thursdays. It's hard with the limited staff. She added that if anyone needs services, please call the Center.

At this time the committee met with Chief Ryan Pease to discuss the Fire Department budget. He provided additional information to the committee.

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The MUNIS Reports and Sub-committee deductions are available as well as the Chief's additional materials. There is a 10% increase in call volume. Overtime is an issue. He stated that his men are taking care of very sick individuals and putting themselves on the line to help during this very bad time and doing their best to work extra hours to support the time. They don't have the staff to take care of the call volume, but their doing their best. The ambulance bill rate increased. The average cost per run between the insurance base billing etc. was $512 per call. With the new changes it's $583 per call. Projection thru this June for FY'20 is $221,000 increase or more based on the new rates and increased call volume. He feels if he produces the revenue, he should have the support. FY'21 estimated costs will be increased another $184,000 based on a 5% increase in transport. He sums up the increase in call volume from 2010 to the present. Projected income for FY'19 for fees, subscriptions, revenue, etc. was $1,417,000 and this year the revenue is $1,632,000 and change. Ludlow has a population higher than Towns across the country. There is also an increase in services based on housing facilities and drug rehab. He spoke about the minimum staffing and what happens when he has to fill in because of shortages and the costs related to that issue. In 2011 two positions were added. He now has 28 firefighters, 5 captains a Deputy Chief and himself with a total staff of 35 employees. Between

111F, training new firefighters and trying to hire firefighters they are 2 to 4 employees short. Other communities run basic minimums of 12 firefighters per shift. He runs 5 firefighters per shift. In the past 15 years, they increased to 4 more firefighters. To keep up with the increase in call volume, there needs to be an increase.

Ms. Collins wanted to inform the Chief that based on the information provided and what has been budgeted for revenue, she increased local receipts by $227,000. The third ambulance that goes out, based on the fact that he's using overtime to support that ambulance going out, the committee asked for a $107,000 reduction and $37,000 from the ambulance. All of that reduction is coming out of the Overtime line item. In addition, $292,000 comes from the 3rd ambulance. If the budget is truly reduced, he would not feel comfortable leaving the additional revenue in the recap. If they do agree with the reduction, they would have to reduce the revenue. Mr. Gregoire said that whatever cuts that would be made on the expense side, would have to be offset on the revenue side. The Chief spoke about the people that need services. If they can't get the 3rd ambulance out, what will that do to the services for residents that need assistance. Ms. Downing would like to know from the Chief, that if he got back a % from the cut-backs, the revenue would have to be decreased. The estimated cost not filled was under $100,000 and the total cuts were $200,000. If he got back $100,000 would the revenue be made up? The Chief said he's not sure. He said it's free money, he can't fill a coverage because of the increase call volume. He has a plan to deal with that and also offset the budget. He cannot do that with the proposed cuts. He will try to make the numbers better as far as the Overtime goes. Ms. Downing said that if he got $100,000 back, would he be talking about new hires. The Chief said no, it would be to operate as he is currently doing. If the money is taken out of the budget, he will run out of money and he won't be able to run the 3rd ambulance because there aren't enough of people to cover the station or money to pay them Ms. Downing asked if he sees with the cut backs that it could also interfere with the 2nd ambulance. He said absolutely, if he's operating at minimum men, he has to call on 2 people immediately. He explained the situation that takes place and what happens to get the manpower to run the ambulance.

Personnel Services: All contractual benefits are accounted for and there are no extra monies expended. Ms. Collins verified that. Ms. Downing asked about the new regulations re: washing of the uniforms. Does that have any impact on the gear as far as cleaning? The Chief said that, Ms. Villano purchased a washing machine for the station and they have a dryer. The PA standard is 10 years on gear. Every employee has gear that could be between $4,500-$5,000. It's hard to replace a set of gear with the money he has to spend out of Capital items. The money in the line item is for replacing gear and the radio system. Everyone has one set of gear. There are 10 sets of extra gear. When there is a fire, the crew can wash that gear and put one of the extra sets of gear on. It's a struggle to keep the men in decent gear. The expenses on the fire side are for the money paid to Springfield for the water use, which is $18,700. The rest is for radio lease in the amount of $19,200 until the new project is in place, and the rest is for gear. Ms. Parker wondered about the Incentive Days. It went up 36%. The Chief explained the career incentive plan and days incentive to her. She asked if the upgrade of the radio is included. The Chief said the system was so broken, he contracted with a company to run that system until the new system is in place. Ms. Collins explained the borrowing within the tax levy re: the radio system.

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Ambulance Budget: Most of the increases are contractual. The 111F salary paramedics is still one of the line items. The $8,001 could be moved to the Regular Ambulance Overtime, then Finance would make their recommendation as to whether or not to keep it in.

Vehicle Repair and Maintenance: It's increased because there is need to repair the ambulances. The software for the ambulances is increased. All Other purchase and services are increased to pay for the ambulance billing. Medical supplies increased by $5,000 because of the extra calls and cost of supplies increase to stock the ambulances. Mr. Gregoire asked about the $47,000 which is contractual obligation for the billing service and associated costs and there is a three-year contract. Ms. Cavallo asked about one of the fire trucks that is totally equipped with supplies, etc. It can't be used to transport to the hospital. Supplies comes out of the regular line item. They also spoke about the Ambulance Subscription Fund and what the Chief is trying to do to educate the public about the fund to save them money if they subscribe to it.

Emergency Management: Ms. Villano said that the line item is $9,000. It was increased to $18,000. It also covers the Blackboard Connect. Mr. Gregoire said they always funded it for a portion of the cost because of reimbursement from MEMA. In the Level 1 budget there was an increase. The Chief said that they pay Blackboard Connect through that. EMPG Preparedness Grant use money to purchase other supplies and use it for emergency notification. Ms. Villano would like to see a separate line item for the Blackboard Connect. It's under Emergency Preparedness. Ms. Villano explained the Emergency Preparedness, Blackboard Connect and what comes out of the line item and where the money was used. Ms. Collins said there is $154,000 in the Ambulance Subscription Fund which does not include the February and March funds. Ms. Parker asked if they looked into Code Red instead of Blackboard Connect. It saved her a lot of money in her town. The Chief informed her on all the uses of the Blackboard Connect. It's used Town wide and also by the Board of Health. Ms. Villano said the Town uses it for outreach, Town Meetings, notifying employees re: closings, etc. The police, fire, DPW, Sheriff's Department, Springfield Water, Gas emergencies all use it. Mr. Gregoire thanked the Chief on behalf of the committee for the services that he provides to keep the community safe.

Mr. Gregoire reevaluated and updated the committee on department budgets. The Recreation Commission and School Departments still need to meet with the committee. He still anticipates that they will schedule time to meet or have a paper hearing with written responses, especially with the Golf Commission and Recreation Commission. He spoke about the letter that he sent to the Selectmen re: postponement of the Town Meeting until June. The Selectmen will make a decision at their next week's meeting. Finalizing the department budgets will be delayed until more information comes forward with more definite numbers. The committee can review the material that we have and evaluate where we stand with the budget process at large. Ms. Collins points out that she put together a recalculated changed budget. She will send the changes to the committee. She is concerned with certain departments because they did not allocate their deductions to the final deductions made by the Sub-committee. She will go through those budgets and flag them and if the departments can't sustain their budget, they can contact the Finance Committee. Ms. Downing asked if it would be possible re: personnel increases. To get some guidelines from the Board of Selectmen regarding a personnel policy going forward with cuts. Will the committee look at new hires, steps, etc. Who makes that decision? Specifically, the

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Library, Treasurer and Building Inspector. She would like feedback on those departments and increases going forward which are beyond regular contractual increases. Mr. Gregoire said the Inspector will go before the Selectmen and the other departments haven't taken any action. He will have a conversation with the Selectmen but actions and increases for next year have to go through serious thought about the necessity. The Commonwealth of MA is suggesting a 1 billion to 3 billion budget gap for this current fiscal year not to mention next fiscal year.

Mr. Gregoire said we need to see what the Selectmen decide about Town Meeting and set a Finance Committee meeting for April and reevaluate what the timeline can hold to make recommendations. Ms. Downing said the next meeting will be a regular and budget meeting on April 15th. She asked when the elections will be held for the committee. Mr. Gregoire will refer to the bylaws. The Town election is set for June 1st. Ms. Downing said a designated person needs to be assigned for the committee's election. Mr. Gregoire will get information on when the committee will hold their elections.

Moved by Ms. Downing, seconded by Ms. Parker to adjourn the Finance Committee meeting at 8:28 p.m.
Vote: Ms. Downing, yes; Ms. Tokarz, yes; Ms. Boyea, yes; Ms. Cavallo, yes; Mr. Moskal, yes; Mr. Alves, yes; Ms. Parker, yes; Mr. Gregoire, yes. 8-0 in favor

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