January 19, 2022

Meeting of the Finance Committee held on Wednesday, January 19, 2022, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Conference Room, Town Hall.

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

Members excused: Susanne Boyea, Nicole Parker, Christopher Ganhao and Matt Goncalves

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

At this time the committee met with Steve Santos, Board of Public Works Chairman to give an update on the repairs of the Greene Town Bridge, at the end of Miller and Chapin Streets, which connects Ludlow to Wilbraham. The bridge is split between the two municipalities. He received three quotes for the repairs. They received a waiver from DECAM to get three prices. The engineer at the Wilbraham DPW does the paperwork and filing, working with the State and MassDOT Bridge Division out of Boston. The original bid for the joint repair was $118,737.50

There are two joints to the bridge, the Ludlow side joint is failing. The engineering is done. That cost was $25,370. That quote came in on October 14, 2021. That was paid by both sides. MEL Corporation quoted the $118,737.50. There might be some overages. Mr. Santos explained the top plate and the bracket and joint bearings being repaired. There was a change order for $8,118.42. It's for the steal and limited labor. The bottom plate where the bearings are siting is compromised. It has to be jacked up and repoured behind that section and the bottom. The second extra work order was $43,000. That charge was for taking off the plate, forming and pouring the concrete in the back, pulling the bearings off the bottom, picking the bearings back up. He went on to explain the work in more detail. The total project as it stands is $313,488.76. There will be a sight inspection on Friday. There should be no other problems. The Town's half will be $156,744.38. The police officer's detail is not included in the price. Each town will pay for their own detail. The project should be completed by mid-February. There is a weight restriction on the bridge which will stay in place. The issue is with the deck. Their thinking about 3-4 million dollars to get the weight restriction lifted. The whole bridge has to be redocked. They will try to get the project on the TIPS Program, mainly for the engineering costs which could be $250,000. Their looking for Federal funding for the infrastructure. He doesn't know the priorities or how much money is coming to MA.

Mr. Santos said that money will come from payroll money not being utilized. For six months to January, they have $124,556. The Director's position is posted and a PW-4 foreman's position that was just filled. That opened up a PW-3 position which is posted. Ms. Downing would like Mr. Santos to update the committee when he fully hires the Director and the PW's. She feels that the DPW with the Robo calls have been doing a great job keeping the residents informed.

Mr. Moskal asked about the trash bills. Mr. Santos said the total trash billing for the trash fee is $756,300 for FY'21. Total abatements and senior discounts were $77,392. Total paid to date was $657,568. There are some people that haven't paid. They were shut off from the collection schedule and some funds are uncollectable. After the shut-down there was $50-60,000 that came in. There is only $21,000 uncollected. This year's billing was supposed to go out at Christmas and New Year's. There is a disconnect with the Collector. The bills are in MUNIS. The Collector

refuses to print and collect the bills. They are all set to go on the DPW side. They are just waiting for the bills. Senior discounts have to be applied every year. Ms. Collins will have a discussion with Mr. Pereira.

Snow & Ice: To date it has been a mild year for accumulating snow. There are issues with ice, which is worse. There's been a lot of salting. There were 14 salting events from freezing rain and ice, from December 1st. to December 19th. They used 1,237 tons of salt. The DPW ordered 1900 tons of salt to date at $68 a ton. They usually use 3,200-3,800 ton a year. The salt cost $129,200. The budget for Public Works Supply is $81,000 for salt. The first plowing event was on January 7th. There was a total accumulation of 5 in. of snow. Workers included 12 DPW personnel for 12 ½ hrs. and 24 hired contractors for 8 hours. The snow overtime for the DPW employees was $11,404. They have $60,000 in the budget for overtime. Contracted services for plowing is at $32,529.50. There is $70,000 in that line item. Vehicle repair is at $3,492.37. There is $28,000 in that line item. He also mentioned other dollar amounts in line items. The total expended is $193,920.77. They have $240,000 in the line item. Mr. Santos wants to increase that number. Ms. Downing said that they don't mind keeping the number low, because they have three years to pay it out. Ms. Collins said they never need three years. The only time that was needed is when they had a $600,000 deficit. The concern and the reason the number isn't increased is if the budget is increased, it can never be lowered. You can't overspend it. There are certain rules. Now, they can over spend it, but if the budget is increased and is not over spent, it prevents them from doing it in the future. Last year there was a $40,000 deficit, which is not much and the year before that was less. In terms of what she's seeing, it really isn't beneficial to raise it. Mr. Santos said he would still like to see that budget raised a bit. With the new school and senior center more salt is being used. The new school is a beautiful facility, but horrible for maintenance. It takes a contractor with two pieces of equipment three hours to maintain. The ground is slopped and once it melts, it's glare ice. It's averaging between 4 and 5 ton of salt to salt it after a snowstorm. The old school took 3 ton of salt. With several events, the price increases. He's concerned about the materials used, not the labor. There will be two or three new roads that the Town will adopt this year. Ms. Downing said that according to the law what they can do and what they should do with the snow, concerns her with the ice and salt. She see's a problem with costs going up. She agrees with Ms. Collins. Snow and ice are all one budget. The committee thanked Mr. Santos for all of his information.

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Ms. Downing stated that there was supposed to be a second Budget Sub-committee meeting. There is one scheduled where neither Mr. Alves nor Ms. Downing can attend. That meeting will be rescheduled. Committee members received a printout of the budget from the December Sub-committee meeting.

Ms. Collins gave an overview of the budget. Level 1 FY'23 budget on the last page with everyone's request resulted in a 1.6-million-dollar deficit in Excess Levy. The Town cannot support that. The Budget Sub-committee discussed all of the new requested positions, other additional expenses that everyone needed and basically came up with changes highlighted in green on the primary Level 2 list. After the meeting and with the changes, they were still negative in Excess Levy. Ms. Villano and Ms. Collins got together and reviewed all the items. They made adjustments hoping that there will be a meeting to discuss the changes with the Sub-committee. That will happen next week. Based on the changes that they did make; the Property

& Liability Insurance was reduced by $50,000. There were several changes and increases to the Police budget. Some of the General Expense items (tasers, cameras etc.) were not approved to date. They removed $37,000 out of that budget for those types of items. They also took the Special Police Training at $137,000 out of the budget because there hasn't been a discussion with the Selectmen re: Special Police Force. The Fire Department included 4 Lieutenants, which were not new positions. Employees moved up to those positions and then hired 2 additional firefighters. They removed one of the firefighters for $65,000 from that budget. Recreation requested and additional $100,000. Based on previous budgets and what's been happening in terms of COVID, they reduced that budget by $75,000 which still gives them a $20,000 increase from last years budget. Employee Benefits, employees are paying 81-19% and all of the Unions have agreed to go to 78-22% which would mean a 3% decrease in Insurance. They reduced Health Insurance by 2% allowing 1% to cover any new positions or employees coming on to the plan. In the next few weeks, there will be a better understanding of what the insurance will look like. They put the school flat against last year. One of the reasons was that the school has received close to 6 million dollars in COVID money over the past few years. They've been able to increase their Revolving Fund and hold on to some of that money and cover expenses where otherwise they would not be able to do that. In addition, they provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in COVID money to the schools to help with staffing, PPE, PPE for the building of the school. There is still money coming in to the school that they will be able to utilize in the next year. If their budget can be left flat against next year and their able to utilize the COVID money, it helps to free up some of the issues. After all those changes, the Excess Levy would be $500,000 which would be a little bit of a cushion if needed. Ms. Downing asked if the budget includes a Grant Writer, Assistant Town Accountant and other positions that were approved by the Selectmen. The money has to work. The Adult Liberian was also approved. Ms. Downing asked about the ARPA money and Health Insurance changes. Ms. Collins said that the Town will be receiving 6.3 million dollars in ARPA Funds. They have received 3.1 million dollars of that sum. In November of 2022 the remainder of the money will be sent. The Selectmen approved an HVAC upgrade for the Public Safety Complex up to $525,000. There is an IT IBM upgrade for Public Safety up to $125,000. The Board of Health is purchasing COVID Testing Kits that would be available to the general public. The Board approved up to $80,000 for those kits. The Selectmen met last night and talked about items that were most important to them. One of them is Veterans Park Elementary School demolition and establishing sports fields at that site and also the Track and Field Complex behind the High School. There is an Interim Final Rule that talked about what the ARPA money can be used for, which is very restrictive. In that study it does talk about demolition of building and creating green space. They feel Veterans Park School and fields would qualify. The Track and Field Complex is an MSBA project which have a final year of audits. There also needs to be an engineering and feasibility study for the T&F Complex before moving forward on the project. The other project that the Selectmen are looking at is Whitney Park rehab to include bleachers, an outdoor pavilion, tennis upgrades, pickleball, updating fields and looking at all the other parks in Town and improving playground equipment, security cameras, sports fields. The Police Department is looking into body cams, cruiser cams, portable street cams, tasers etc. She's not sure of that eligibility. If it is not ARPA funded, it will be coming through in Capital requests in the future. Mr. Moskal asked about the Dog Park. Ms. Collins didn't have much information on that, but said she thought there was a grading issue, but doesn't know what needs to be done too actually open. Ms. Collins stated that the ARPA money sits in its own fund. Ms. Collins hopes that at the next Sub-committee meeting they will finalize

the Level 2 budget, that would then be given to the Finance Committee to schedule appointments and meet with all the departments.

The next Finance Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 16, 2022, unless notified.

Moved by Mr. Alves, seconded by Ms. Cavallo to approve and sign the Finance Committee Minutes of November 17, 2021.
Vote: 5-0 in favor

Moved by Mr. Alves, seconded by Ms. Cavallo to approve and sign the Finance Committee Minutes of April 28, 2021.
Vote: 5-0 in favor

Moved by Mr. Alves, seconded by Ms. Cavallo to adjourn the Finance Committee Meeting at 7:02 p.m.
Vote: 5-0 in favor

Susanne Boyea

Ludlow Finance Committee

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