

*Town of Ludlow, Massachusetts*  
*Capital Improvement Planning Committee*

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**Minutes of January 13, 2025, Capital Improvement Planning Committee.**  
**Meeting began at 5:30 p.m.**

**Members Present: Marc Strange, James Gennette, Josh Carpenter, Luis Vitorino, Tony Sanches, Ron Saloio**

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**5:30 p.m. Pledge of Allegiance**

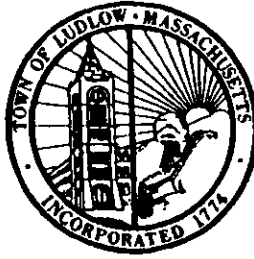
**VISITATIONS**

**Jamie Tomas & James Goodreau – DPW Requests & Clarification**

Mr. Gennette: We previewed some requests last month and did a little bit of research. We asked the DPW to come in so they could talk about their requests. We had some questions and while we're here maybe we can talk about the trash a little bit, especially pertaining to the barrels as we're thinking Capital has some kind of place in this.

Mr. Strange: It looks like there's 3-4 requests. A bobcat, pack track loader, F150 4x4 with a plow and two F350's. I think the questions the committee had was for the 4x4 with a plow that I think was for Dave and we were wondering if Dave was going to be doing plowing because if he is going to have a plow on his vehicle if he is going to be doing plowing. The other question was same question for the F350's with the plows and what was the difference between the utility package and the plow.

Mr. Tomas: As far as Dave, our facilities manager, could potentially be plowing if we had the need. It's getting harder to get contractors so we had that in mind for the future. In case he had to plow at some point he is more than willing to do it so we would just need a vehicle for him to plow with. For the smaller trucks, the fleet is getting really bad. I brought some pictures with me. I have some pictures. That particular truck is the utility body that we want to replace. As you can see it's in very poor condition. Our mechanic had it on the lift about a month ago and the frame is completely rotted out. The utility body, which is the back section of the truck where we carry tools is in really poor condition. All the compartments are starting to rot out. We've had to make panels for it several times. That truck has close to 300,000 miles. That's a 2000 Ford F350. It's time to replace some of our smaller equipment. Our bigger trucks, sanders, 6-wheelers, are in fairly good shape because a lot of them are newer. We have a triaxle that we've had in the garage for months now. We found the whole under carriage under the body that the conveyer chain was in really poor condition and getting ready to fall apart so we got some quotes on a new body. The



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body alone, not the truck, was \$95,000. Our mechanic, John, did a fantastic job. We took the body off the truck and had it all rewelded underneath, all new piping for the hydraulics, all new wiring and I think we're a little over \$20,000 and the truck is back together and like new again. The sanders are in good shape, it's just our smaller equipment, our pickup trucks. Our one tons, which are our F550's, are in decent shape. One of them is fairly new. Our pick-ups now are starting to get to the point where we can't repair them. That's why I'm coming in front of the committee to let you guys know that they are in poor condition and in the near future we're going to have to get a few more trucks to get our fleet back up to par. A lot of these trucks are very, very close to not passing inspection. That's why we made the few requests for the smaller trucks.

Mr. Gennette: So, this truck is a pickup with a utility rack in the back, does it have a plow in the front?

Mr. Tomas: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: So, we're replacing existing equipment so there's no above and beyond to what you were looking at before?

Mr. Tomas: No. Any equipment we're requesting, we actually have truck 44 which has been out of service for over a year. We're probably going to auction that off. It's beyond repair. That's also a plow truck with a utility body. I think that's a 1998. The next one is truck 30 which we've spent a lot of money on. It's still in decent condition but I want to look within a year or so to replace that one. Truck 63 is no longer road worthy and we just received a new F350 that we put in for capital last year to replace that.

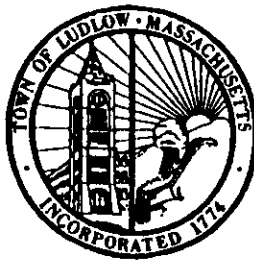
Mr. Gennette: So, you've been getting a truck a year at this point, right?

Mr. Tomas: Right. We got one new pick up thus far.

Mr. Gennette: Over the past 4 years you've been getting on average a truck a year. I think one year you got the sweeper.

Mr. Tomas: And we got a one ton. An F550.

Mr. Gennette: So, you've been replacing the equipment as we go along. How long was the gap before that?



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Mr. Tomas: There was a long gap in the fact that the Board of Public Works at that time was trying to replace our sanders because they were all 1989 & up.

Mr. Goodreau: They're a 3-year commitment so you get one and 3 years later you get another one, 3 years later you get another one.

Mr. Gennette: Is that on an agreement?

Mr. Goodreau: No, that's just how they request stuff. What do you think?

Mr. Tomas: 33 is the newest. The 10-wheeler is the oldest one. The one we just rebuilt.

Mr. Gennette: The only other thing I was going to ask was is there going to be any gaps in the future where we're not going to be looking at a new truck? If we ran into a hard time and we don't give this to you, how backed up are you? Do you need less plows and more sanders as everything starts to warm up with climate change?

Mr. Tomas: The sanders will be good for at least the next 3 years before we have to start looking. The mechanic we have now does a heck of a job. He tries to fix as much as we can in house. I can show you some pictures of that truck. It's pretty amazing what he did. Having him we can actually fix things in house and save money and put trucks back together. I don't see our sanders being any worry for the next 3 years.

Mr. Gennette: We have enough of them?

Mr. Tomas: Yes. We have back up in case. We saved one of our old Ford L8000 as a back up and that truck is still running. We've had it on the road to replace the 10-wheeler we've had under repair and it's doing a heck of a job.

Mr. Gennette: This one is not getting saved though? This one is getting replaced and done.

Mr. Tomas: That is an auction item. As far as the pickups themselves, the utility body, we could definitely use the utility body. With the pickups we still can buy some time with the equipment we have, though not much. They're getting to the point they need to be shipped out of here. We need dependable vehicles. Five years ago, we had 26-28 subcontractors that used to come into town to help us in the winter and this year we have 13. Construction companies and contractors don't want to plow anymore. Insurance is expensive. If we get a year like this year where we



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have no snow, to spend \$5,000 on insurance and not make any of that back is a tough sell for anybody in business.

Mr. Gennette: What about the bandit?

Mr. Tomas: That's our tree department chipper and is still in fairly decent shape but it's starting to get worn. A lot of the hydraulics are in need of replacement and we're going to have to replace that in the very near future.

Mr. Gennette: Is that something the golf course could use?

Mr. Tomas: I did speak with Ryan at the golf course and we told him that if we did get a new chipper down the road we could give them our existing one so if they have any kind of tree damage.

Mr. Gennette: Does it have any longevity in it?

Mr. Tomas: Yes. It would be a good back up for us. If we had a major storm to have 2 chippers in Town would be ideal. I went through the October snowstorm and it was rough with 1 chipper.

Mr. Vitorino: It's not on our list.

Mr. Gennette: We have the request right here.

Mr. Carpenter: We have the request for it but it looks like we're looking at a compact excavator, wheel loader and bobcat.

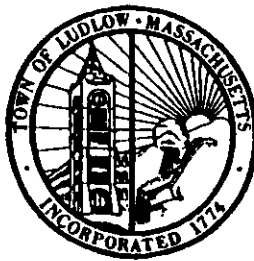
Mr. Tomas: I think that was last year's request.

Mr. Strange: I think I just mislabeled it.

Mr. Tomas: It's through bobcat. It should be a 1590XP.

Mr. Vitorino: Instead of bobcat compact track loader it's a chipper.

Mr. Saloio: This chipper the golf course has; do you pull that with a pickup truck?



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Mr. Tomas: Yes, typically if they have any damage up there, we love to help them, but if they have some small damage they could take care of it themselves. Typically, we go up there to give them a hand. A lot of the time they have to hire Northern, which can get expensive.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Saloio, does any of this sound crazy to you at any level?

Mr. Saloio: No. Looking at those pictures, I've seen plenty of utility bodies and trucks that look like that. Salt does a job on them.

Mr. Tomas: We do have the facilities manager's truck, which also an option, but that truck is in fairly good shape. We can always play it on the flip side and put a plow on that truck instead of purchasing a new truck. It's probably \$8,500 to put a plow on that truck. I'm pretty sure it's a 4-wheel drive. It was the building department's truck and it's in good shape. That's thinking outside the box to save a little bit of money.

Mr. Gennette: Into 2026 I'm seeing multiple F350 super duty's with plows in the request. Is that just a lease payment rolling forward or a one-time purchase for the truck?

Mr. Strange: They requested 2.

Mr. Gennette: We're replacing more trucks in the future and an F150 4x4 with a plow. That's facilities maintenance.

Mr. Tomas: Correct. The F150 is very comparable to the truck that he drives now. It's just a Dodge Ram.

Mr. Gennette: If I'm reading this correctly this is basically a replacement request for multiple pickups over the next 2 years.

Mr. Tomas: Correct. Realistically if we can stretch it out for 3 years and start replacing some of the vehicles we have now that are getting to that stage where they are beyond repair then that would work. I would say the utility body here is by far the worst truck we have in our fleet.

Mr. Gennette: Did we talk about the wheel loader, the L60? It's just a lease.

Mr. Sanches: The F150 4x4 we can skip the \$53,000 and only spend \$8,500 and put a plow on the existing truck?



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Mr. Tomas: We could.

Mr. Sanches: What are you going to do with the existing truck if we get him a new truck?

Mr. Tomas: The existing truck, I probably wouldn't auction it but the golf course their truck up there is not the greatest either. I think they have an older F250.

Mr. Gennette: At some point they're going to want to stop getting the DPW's old stuff.

Mr. Tomas: We just got a bunch of cruisers from the Police Department and they came in handy. The plow, as opposed to a brand-new truck with a plow is an option. That might even be something we can do in-house. Purchase wiring harnesses, the plow and mounting brackets and I'm sure our mechanic can put it together. Whatever you guys are willing to pass along would be great and I totally understand.

Mr. Gennette: We want to make sure you guys are safe. Do you have any other equipment you want to talk about?

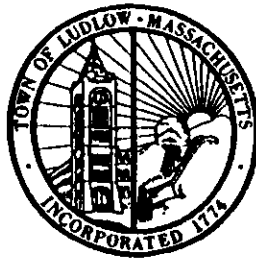
Mr. Tomas: No.

Mr. Gennette: The trash containers. We're worried about the bill. Everyone is talking about \$300 trash bill and I think it's widely accepted that that's way too much money. It's over what the trash bill is. Trying to bring everything down we were thinking we may be able to put \$775,000 if we either paid them off or we went long term with the barrels on capital at least we could save the community that money on the trash fee. We're still in the middle of trying to figure out if that is a good idea but do you have any thoughts on that?

Mr. Goodreau: I think that by taking it out of capital you're saving that \$150,000/year out of the budget. I'd rather do that than get one of the trucks. It makes sense. I think we're going to have to spread it out because that's how we signed the contract with them. I don't know what the process would be to redo a contract to try to buy it upfront but we can definitely look into that. We can make that call to check.

Mr. Gennette: That would be great. Do we know what the cost is per resident right now?

Mr. Goodreau: If you did everything, disposals, barrels, collection and divide it by the households it's between \$245-\$255 total cost with the estimates. You also have the senior



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abatements. If you go to \$200 you're probably charging seniors \$150 because you're keeping the ratio the same.

Mr. Gennette: If we took \$154,000 off every year between 7,300 households...

Mr. Strange: When you factor in cost should we do it by 6,500 households, if we say \$100 trash fee and budget \$650,000, factoring in uncollectables?

Mr. Goodreau: Most of them are abatements. You'd be surprised how many seniors, there's very rarely on the unpayables, there's maybe 100 people. Once their trash does not get picked up the first day they're in there the next week with \$100. Some people don't come in until you actually stop collection. The cart is going to be delivered to every household, even the people who haven't paid so we have to figure out something on that aspect too.

Mr. Gennette: Once those are paid for they belong to the property.

Mr. Goodreau: Rhonda just sent out color codes. Recycle is going to be maroon and trash is tan so it looks good together. We found out last week the Piney Lane Bridge, they have started working out there. We just found out they awarded the contract to Tully Construction. They're out there now marking trees to come down, some temporary utility poles. We're going to try to get some plans so Marc can put them online. That project is all funded by the state. They have engineers watching it. The cost of it is 5.3 million dollars and we're not paying a dime. They will have a temporary bridge up, tear out the old one, install a new one and take down the temporary one. It's about a 2-year project.

Mr. Gennette: At least they'll be able to get a fire truck over it. Thanks, I appreciate you coming in. To go over some of the requests we had before, one of the school requests we had was for a power system for the school. The original request indicated that I perceived it to be that it was to power supplies to back up systems and the request was for \$80,000. It wasn't close to that so I figured it was maybe an error so I reached out to Marc and Marc reached out to the school and they did say they were misunderstanding what it is and it was for infrastructure purposes but they didn't provide any other details as far as what the infrastructure meant. Mr. Tiano offered to come in but honestly with a request like this I just need a statement of work and an estimate. I don't need the superintendent of schools to come in and win me over. I want to see what the estimate is and scope of work is. I know we're not making decisions tonight. We can't because we don't have free cash. We didn't see a request for the Veteran's, right?



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Mr. Strange: I don't think they submitted anything. I think they talked about it.

Mr. Gennette: There's some concerns there with what's going on with the truck. Marc, if you wouldn't mind reaching out to Eric and seeing if you can get some information about what's going on over there. Just to tell the community what's going on, over at the Vet's Center they have a food pantry and they've been using a volunteer's truck and trailer to get the food and bring it back. They have no official request yet but for me that presents a liability concern if that volunteer gets into an accident and we don't have any insurance. I talked to Chief Pease a little bit about his fire truck request. This is the 1989 fire truck. I would hate to have my house on fire and an antique fire truck pull up. He also had the CPR devices. I asked him what exactly those were and they're compression devices. They're roughly \$20,000 apiece. He has put a grant in for them last year and wasn't awarded. He put in again for it this year. He is hoping the grant comes through but he still needed to put it in for capital in case he didn't get the grant. If he got the grant he wouldn't exercise the capital for it. These compression devices are relatively new, have been out a few years, and it's for doing CPR chest compressions. It's a device they put over somebody and it does consistent, constant chest compressions leaving an EMT the ability to do IV and other stuff. The hospitals are using them now. He said it's most important when you have to transport somebody downstairs and around a corner and they have to try to do continual chest compressions. He thinks these are pretty vital to life saving.

Mr. Carpenter: I saw these a few weeks ago when I was at the hospital. It's pretty cool to see them in action.

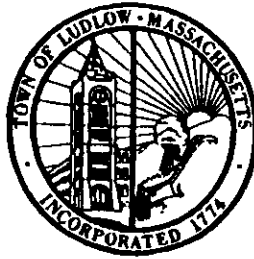
Mr. Gennette: Does anybody have any follow up on any requests other than the ones we've just talked about?

Mr. Strange: One note on the plan. I put the fire engine in for 2028, since that would be the first year we make payment.

Mr. Carpenter: If I remember my conversation with the Chief he kind of wanted to get that price locked in now.

Mr. Gennette: It's a 3-year order window. He does want to get the price locked in so he wants to be able to say that capital is going to be available. He's trying to time it with the end of the payments for the last truck so we're not paying more on multiple vehicles in any given year. I did ask him if it's possible to pay the lease off. He said he would take a look but didn't think there would be any kind of a problem. If we wanted to pay off the lease for the ladder truck now





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we could do that. With the things that are coming up, do you think it's better to have that? What would you like to see better?

Mr. Strange: I think I'd rather have the flexibility.

Mr. Gennette: The flexibility of the free cash rather than exhaust the resources available. Those are considerations. Mr. Saloio, anything from the school from their latest budget?

Mr. Saloio: No.

Mr. Gennette: Did you inform them of what we were talking about?

Mr. Saloio: Yes. I mentioned we needed more clarification on the closets and more than likely the smart boards were a no again.

Mr. Gennette: With the \$80,000 request for me it was if you have something that's a necessity, I'm all in. I don't think anybody here is going to turn down a fire panel for the middle school but just asking for a blank check for \$80,000 is not something this board is willing to do. You have to give us the info and it has to be a necessity. We did the phones, fire panels, doors, HVAC units, we're willing to spend money on the school but we don't want to do it frivolously.

Mr. Carpenter: Can you remind me; did we approve the Silverado last year for them?

Mr. Gennette: We did.

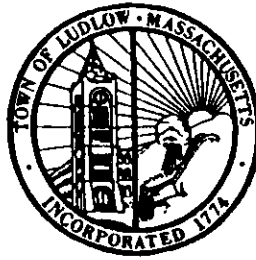
Mr. Carpenter: What did they do with the old one?

Mr. Gennette: Probably went to auction. We would get that in a report for the end of the year. They have to send it to the Board of Selectmen to relinquish control of vehicles and the Board of Selectmen have to approve for disposal or send them to auction.

Mr. Strange: We also get a list of vehicles for insurance purposes. Moving out of the requests if nobody has anything else.

**COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

**Review and discuss Five-year capital plan**



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Mr. Gennette: I think I mentioned at the last meeting that we really don't know what's coming down from our newly elected president and his team. He has promised a lot of changes but we really don't know what those changes are. The only thing we really do know is something is going to happen. In preparation for that I think we need to keep our spending at a minimum because we have no idea what's coming. It could be bad. If we plan well and things work out well then we're ahead of the game.

Mr. Saloio: I was in favor of spending as little as possible anyway.

Mr. Carpenter: I think it was good the DPW came in today, especially when they said their F150 request for \$53,000 could be knocked down to \$8,000 and taken off of capital. Obviously I have some other things we're going to look at. If my math is correct on the things I'm looking at it's \$200,000 to save off the requests.

Mr. Gennette: Just from the DPW?

Mr. Carpenter: No, across the board. From PD, schools, DPW. The ending free cash, \$182,825 is if we approve everything, correct?

Mr. Gennette: Yes.

Mr. Sanches: 2.8 is the number I'm looking at.

Mr. Strange: That includes the free cash allocations on top.

Mr. Gennette: That's stabilization coming out, OPEB.

Mr. Strange: That's \$815,000 in free cash. About 2 million dollars in capital.

Mr. Gennette: The total request for capital was 2 million. And you're telling me we have 1 million in free cash leftover after that.

Mr. Strange: No, all the requests, there was 2 million dollars in capital requests and \$815,000 in free cash allocation, stabilization, OPEB. We have a place holder of 3 million dollars in free cash. Between the free cash allocations and capital there is 2.8 million dollars allocated right now. Two million in capital, \$815,000 in free cash. Josh is saying if you deny \$200,000 worth of



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requests there's 1.8 million dollars. That's both new requests and existing lease payments and things like that.

Mr. Gennette: I think we'll have a better view once we have free cash certified, which is the next thing.

Mr. Carpenter: I have 1 question about the school. The cafeteria heat at the middle school, 1A & 1B is \$16,000 more than sounds like the same units at the high school for 27. Is there a reason why it's \$16,000 more? If you look at the last 2 in 27 we're at 85 and the first 2 for 26, which is the cafeteria heat only is 101.

Mr. Strange: I suspect they're probably bigger, more powerful units.

Mr. Carpenter: Last year they were \$85,000 for the gym at the high school.

Mr. Strange: There's 5 at the high school and 2 at Baird.

Mr. Vitorino: A question on the Fire Department. The ladder truck for 2026 is that the one we already agreed on, we made the purchase but it's not here?

Mr. Strange: They have it.

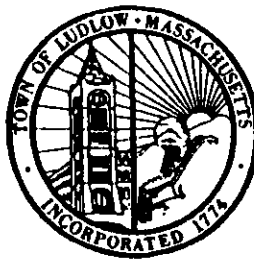
Mr. Vitorino: That was one we did ahead of time. We paid the first year. Then you have a ladder truck for 2027.

Mr. Gennette: That's the last payment.

Mr. Vitorino: The fire engine is the replacement for the 89 fire truck. How do we actually do that? Do we allocate \$244,888? We can't allocate it to this year because it's not in the numbers. Isn't it just a vote saying years from now I'm going to say yes?

Mr. Strange: I think what the Chief does is he informs whoever the vendor is that our Capital Committee has approved this expenditure for 2028 and they take it as his word.

Mr. Vitorino: At one point we said something about do we make the first payment now to lock it in? He wanted something to lock it in so I just took that as shouldn't we be moving that \$240



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into this year's but I get it. It's a leap of faith. A vote of a board for future expenditures. That's probably what we did with the ladder truck I just don't remember.

Mr. Gennette: This is a 1.2-million-dollar fire truck and the people building it want to know that if they start building it that it's sold.

Mr. Saloio: How long will it take to build?

Mr. Strange: 3 years.

Mr. Gennette: Originally, for a little history, this truck was actually supposed to be before the ladder truck but the ladder truck came in and the lift was compromised and it became a security issue so they had to keep the 89 truck longer and put the ladder in front of it. It became a high priority especially with the new mill buildings.

Mr. Strange: Did you want to talk about the email I sent today?

Mr. Carpenter: It's not finalized, right?

Mr. Strange: Stabilization is a policy so that's the minimum amount that needs to be put in. Building infrastructure is a warrant article so that's got to go in as well unless Town Meeting reverses the mandate. OPEB is discretionary, although we took the \$100,000 out of the operating budget but nothing in OPEB would be great. That's what our rating agencies look for. We could take the \$100,000 out of turf replacement. I believe the reserve number is also a policy. There's not too much wiggle room. We got notification today from our insurance provider that our health insurance costs are going to be increasing somewhere around 15% for fiscal year 26. For fiscal year 25 our employee benefit budget is just about 10 million dollars, so that's 1.5 million. To provide some perspective on that, due to prop 2 ½ we can only increase our property tax revenue by 2 ½ % more than what it was in fiscal year 25. For fiscal year 26 we can only raise 1.3 in tax revenue. We need to come up with another \$200,000 in revenue just to meet our health insurance increases. That's before we meet any contractual obligations for employees or any other increases. We have some work to do but that just came across today. We're meeting with FinCom on Wednesday evening and we'll be talking about it a little bit more. Off of the top of our heads, some of the options, none of which are particularly attractive, but are prop 2 ½ override, increase in the trash fee, more than the \$200 which is currently in the budget, a one-time infusion of free cash to mitigate that increase, or short-term bonds. I will say this is not a Ludlow problem; this is a state-wide problem. Out of 300 municipalities, MIIA has 175 member



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communities who are all going to be impacted by this. In speaking with some of our neighboring towns they're also looking at mid teen health insurance increases. This is going to be something that many communities, if not all of them, are grappling with, so we're not alone. But that doesn't make it any less difficult for Ludlow. Difficult conversations coming ahead and we'll get through it.

Mr. Gennette: My company went up 23 so it's not just municipalities that are feeling it.

**Board to approve and sign the meeting minutes from December 16, 2024.**

**Motion made by Mr. Carpenter** to approve and sign the meeting minutes of December 16, 2024, with all members present. **Mr. Sanches second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Mr. Gennette: Do we know when our next scheduled date is?

Mr. Strange: February 10<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Gennette: Hopefully we're going to have our free cash at that point. The Veteran's didn't get their request in before the date but I think we need to figure out what's going on over there because if somebody is using that I worry about the liability. I'd rather buy a truck then be in a lawsuit.

**Motion made by Mr. Vitorino** to adjourn at 6:23 p.m. **Mr. Sanches second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

