

The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, January 21, 2025, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room at the Town Hall.

Members Present: Derek DeBarge, Manuel Silva, James Gennette, Antonio Goncalves and William Rosenblum

Members Absent:

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

NEW BUSINESS

Building Department – To discuss increase of electrical, plumbing and gas building fees.

Mr. DeBarge: You just handed us a list of changes in permitting fees from the Commissioner's office.

Ms. Strempek: I gave you what we currently have and what we are looking to go up to. We have plumbing, gas, electrical and building. The green sheets you currently have in your packets are what we are currently at. At the bottom it says it was revised in 2019. I do have one that goes back as far as 2018 so they haven't been updated in years. We have been looking at different municipalities around the area. The plumbing inspector was just in talking to me about the prices. We kind of went off of the City of Gardner. That's for plumbing and gas.

Mr. Gennette: We're basically in line with Gardner, other than the residential boiler.

Ms. Strempek: Yes, because currently if you go through our plumbing we're already at 50 so we're going up.

Mr. Goncalves: Do we have any idea what this compares to Belchertown or Granby or South Hadley?

Ms. Strempek: The inspectors did a lot of the looking at the different municipalities. We were looking at Easthampton. For Easthampton I have one for building, one for electrical and we went off of those for our updates. He's the one that decided we should go off of Gardner. He's got more experience in how much work goes into the inspections and things like that.

Mr. Gennette: Gardner is pretty close to a structure as ours. A lot of the same population numbers. It's been mentioned before that we compared our School Department to theirs.

Mr. DeBarge: I agree. We're very similar.

Mr. Silva: It's all well and good to look at other communities, but how are their financials? Are they in great shape where they can do this? I think we need to look at our situation and what's going on in our community more than other communities.

Mr. Gennette: I kind of like leading the way. If this is where we think we want to go with the fees regardless of what any other town looks like then we should vote on it.

Ms. Strempek: Any increase is better than what we're currently at.

Mr. Silva: I love fees. Between the tax rate.

Mr. Goncalves: On the plumbing side this isn't really any type of big increase that's going to make or break a project. On the building side is where we probably need to look a little closer.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to accept the plumbing and gas permit fees as proposed. Mr. Gennette second.

Mr. Gennette: The commercial new construction basic fixtures went from \$150 to \$175. I'm trying to find the fee for the commercial fixtures on plumbing.

Ms. Strempek: For plumbing it's \$100 plus \$10 a fixture so it would end up being \$110. Plus, square footage. It's \$.10/SF. We're getting rid of the square footage in fees.

Mr. Gennette: That drastically throws up the cost of new construction. You're going from a base fee of \$100 to \$175 and instead of just doing \$10/structure you're doing \$10/fixture. That's sizable. I just want to make sure that's what we want.

Ms. Strempek: Again, we're not doing any of the square footage for it. If it's between 1-3,000/SF it's \$.10/SF, if it's between 3,001 or 2,999 it goes up from there. We're not doing the square footage.

Mr. Goncalves: It's not that big of a deal I don't think. If you have 5-6 fixtures and a couple of bathrooms.

Mr. Gennette: The problem is when you have 1,00 fixtures.

Mr. Goncalves: We don't have that issue unfortunately. We're not going to build another HealthSouth.

Mr. Silva: Do you have an estimate of the additional cost for commercial property with all these fee increases.

Mr. Goncalves: That depends on what you're building. A hotel or a garage.

Mr. Silva: I agree but there's got to be some kind of additional cost.

Mr. Goncalves: A self-storage place is going to be an extra \$80. Encompass is going to be \$8,000.

Mr. Silva: With all the permits are we talking under \$100 or a few hundred?

Ms. Strempek: I'm not sure.

All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Ms. Strempek: For electrical he went based off of Easthampton. It also might be easier to read than what we currently have. These are very difficult for people to go through and figure out what the fees are. We're hoping it's easier for people to see and read.

Mr. Gennette: The service charge is separate than a single-family dwelling inspection. Is that accurate?

Ms. Strempek: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: A 1-family inspection currently it's \$175 for 125-amp service and we're just going directly to a \$250 for both?

Ms. Strempek: Right now, for a 1 family dwelling if it's up to 200 amps it's \$225 so we're going up to \$250.

Mr. Gennette: If it's a single-family dwelling at \$125 we're also going to \$250. They're both going up to \$250 the way I'm looking at this. \$175, I apologize.

Ms. Strempek: Somebody came in and said they're not even doing 100-amp services on houses so that's why we just made it a flat fee of \$250.

Mr. DeBarge: Basically, you went up \$25.

Mr. Gennette: Car charging is a new one.

Ms. Strempek: Yes.

Mr. Gennette: What other ones are getting added?

Ms. Strempek: There were certain things that were on here like residential, there was miscellaneous, which a lot of people put down on their applications, which cost \$40 and that doesn't even cover the inspection for the inspector to go out there. We're losing money. Any kind of non-specific work or anything they have to go out and do is basically a \$75 fee.

Mr. Gennette: Basically, you've renamed other to non-specific work and instead of charging \$40 it went to \$75.

Ms. Strempek: Correct. Basically, EV chargers, which is a car charging station, gas dispensers is \$150 and those were not on here. The gas dispensers, when they go to the gas stations they reprogram the pumps, on the commercial side.

Mr. Goncalves: They reprogram the pumps?

Ms. Strempek: When they have new pumps and they switch out their pumps they have to put in new pumps we have to go in and do the gas dispenser.

Mr. Gennette: Solar panels went from \$150 to \$525?

Ms. Strempek: Commercial was \$500.

Mr. Gennette: I hate this sheet.

Ms. Strempek: This is very difficult to read and understand and that's why we get tons of applications that are incorrect. We're trying to make it easier. There's so many new things coming out.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to approve the new electrical fee permits for 2025 and beyond until reviewed again as presented. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Ms. Strempek: Last we have building permit fees. I have Easthampton as a base. With building we didn't want to go up too much. It said it was revised in 2023 and I don't think it was because I don't think Leslie actually revised everything. We did go up a little bit. We went up \$1 per thousand on residential so instead of \$9/thousand we are \$10/thousand and a couple of different things did go up like a new single-family dwelling instead of a \$500 minimum...

Mr. Goncalves: \$10 per thousand of?

Ms. Strempek: Your base price, whatever your total project cost is.

Mr. Goncalves: So, if it's a half a million dollars it's a \$5,000 permit? A little while ago you said that when you're doing a gas permit, it doesn't cover the cost of the gas permit. So, we have \$5,000 of expense on a single-family house?

Ms. Strempek: They way they had it before was \$9 per thousand. We've gotten permits for \$3,600.

Mr. Goncalves: It just seems like with all the permits, curb cuts, sewer and everything else a house is looking at \$10,000 of fees.

Ms. Strempek: Easily.

Mr. DeBarge: Where we had a \$500 minimum.

Ms. Strempek: Right. Again, we never see a minimum of \$500.

Mr. Silva: That's why there's a housing shortage.

Ms. Strempek: Again, we only went up \$1 on those.

Mr. Goncalves: I was thinking of Armand on Hundred Acres it's only \$1 but that's about \$700-\$800 a house for him.

Ms. Strempek: I know they were doing resubmission fees and we don't do those.

Mr. Goncalves: If they expire?

Ms. Strempek: No, if they have to do an amendment there is an amendment fee. A lot of times people will put in their applications and they're not correct, there's missing paperwork, no LVL's or things of that nature. If that's what happens we just hold on to them. There were other building commissioners that would want to give everything back to the candidate and have them resubmit it altogether, which I understand, but we just hold onto it and let them get their paperwork, let them know what they need instead of having to do a resubmission fee each time they have to add something.

Mr. Goncalves: I would have a real hard time with half of the original cost for a permit that renews after a year. If you're building something and all of a sudden there's a shortage of some material or you can't get an electrician or plumber and you pop over that year and you've got a \$7,000 permit you're looking at \$3,500 because it took you a little bit longer than the year. There's no real hard expense on your part there.

Ms. Strempek: Since I've been here, since June 2023, there has only been 1 candidate that has had to do that, and they only did that because they were forced to by the Building Commissioner at that time, and it never should have never come to. That candidate ended up coming before all of you and we did a reversal. Everyone has gotten their houses completed and gotten everything done. I'm not saying that's going to continue to happen.

Mr. Gennette: If that's the case and it's not even a thing, why are we implementing it?

Mr. Goncalves: I get the fact that if they have a permit and it's sitting there...

Mr. Gennette: You want them to keep moving but at the same time if they run into a problem, as we saw where the Building Inspector was a problem on one of them and they didn't get out there in time to issue them the permit to do it and when they went back in they wanted to charge them for it.

Mr. Goncalves: As long as that person is advised that they have the ability to come before us to discuss it and possibly get it abated. Somebody could get hurt and they can't go to work and they have to slow down on the construction.

Ms. Strempek: There are special circumstances and I'm sure the Building Commissioner understands that as well.

Mr. Goncalves: That's a lot of money to go over a year. It's a ton of money to begin with and we're going to whack somebody again if they go over a year. I want to make sure there's a good excuse and they can ask to have somebody look at it.

Mr. Gennette: I worry about this because of the site plan that the Planning Board ran into, where they had to get a new site plan and they were charging them an egregious amount of money to get a second site plan when it didn't require anything new. I don't want to get into a situation like that here.

Mr. Rosenblum: As you stated, we do have an appeal process.

Mr. Gennette: They have an appeal process too but it fell on deaf ears.

Mr. Rosenblum: You take it case by case. It's a circumstance that you can't foresee. As she's saying, we're not running into it.

Mr. Gennette: This Board would be receptive to an appeal. Whatever we set as a standard goes past just us.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve the residential building permit fees as submitted. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve the commercial building rates as submitted. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE

7. Louis Gilli, EH&S Engineer – Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) informing the Board they will be conducting the 2023 1st quarter inspection of its natural gas pipeline during this calendar quarter (January 1 – March 31, 2025).

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. **Mr. Silva second. Motion passed 4-0-1.**

8. Jon S. Baldwin – Letter informing the Board of his resignation from the Ludlow Housing Authority effective December 17, 2024.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to accept his resignation and thank him for his service. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Mr. Goncalves: Do we have to advertise that vacancy?

Mr. DeBarge: That's coming up.

9. Chief Ryan Pease – Letter to the Board requesting that Firefighter Zachary Ellison be allowed to carry over two (2) additional days of vacation time.

Mr. DeBarge: You'll notice in the letter it's due to being out on an injury. Common practice for us to do that.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve the request for Firefighter Zachary Ellison be allowed to carry over two (2) additional days of vacation time. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

10. Chief Ryan Pease – Letter to the Board requesting that Firefighter Sean Burt to be allowed to carry over twenty (20) additional days of vacation time.

Mr. DeBarge: Still the same. Injured on duty.

Mr. Rosenblum: He's been out since March.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to allow Sean Burt to carry over twenty (20) additional days of vacation time. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

11. Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E. District 2 Highway Director – Informing the Board of the recent bridge inspection for Piney Lane/Broad Brook.

Mr. Goncalves: It looks like we have a little bit of a maintenance issue than major structural. There's some runoff there that created some ruts and there's some patches on top and some of the dirt on the side coming in and looks like it may have washed away. Maybe make sure DPW is aware of it and see what they need to do with it.

Mr. Gennette: This is saying Chapter 90 funds may be used for that purpose.

Mr. Strange: I think they're working on it.

Mr. Gennette: So, this is in addition to it? They're saying it we can tack it on to 90?

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

12. Chief Valadas – Request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for injuries sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on January 14, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve charging off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for injuries sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on January 14, 2025. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of December 17, 2024.

2025 FEB 19 A 10:43

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of December 17, 2024, with all members present. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of January 7, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Selectmen Minutes of January 7, 2025, with all members present. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to sign the corrected Common Victualler License for Pride.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to sign the corrected Common Victualler License for Pride. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly vote to appropriate \$6,000 in 40R funding for the Collins Center.

Mr. DeBarge: Do we remember doing this for Charter?

Mr. Rosenblum: Yes.

Mr. DeBarge: We can't find the record of that.

Mr. Strange: We cannot find the appropriation that you guys made.

Mr. DeBarge: Do you remember voting for it?

Mr. Rosenblum: Yes, it was for an additional 3 meetings at about \$2,000. I do remember doing it. It was right after. Was Town Meeting in October? Probably somewhere in August or September.

Mr. Strange: We searched all the meeting minutes and we could not find the appropriation so it hasn't been paid.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve to appropriate \$6,000 in 40R funding for the Collins Center pending we haven't paid them already. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

NEW BUSINESS

Board to discuss and vote whether to add the Ludlow Housing Authority open set to the March 2025 ballot.

Mr. Rosenblum: They'd have to pull papers and have them in a week and half by the 31st. They have to send everything out to be put on the ballot.

Mr. DeBarge: It's an unusual circumstance with a resignation.

Mr. Rosenblum: Do we allow it and maybe advertise? People can do a write in candidate.

Mr. Strange: When are papers due back?

Mr. Rosenblum: The 31st.

Mr. Silva: The only thing with a write in candidate is you get one.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would say between our office and the Clerk's office we get this out as soon as possible to put this on the election in March.

Mr. Strange: The letter from Kim says I am notifying the Board of Selectmen of this vacancy according to M.G.L. c.41, S109; c.41, S10 "no election shall be held for any office pursuant to this selection unless the Selectmen file with the Town Clerk notice of an election for such office not less than fifteen (15) days before the last day to submit nomination papers. It's the 21st."

Mr. Rosenblum: So, we can't do it. Can the Board do an appointment based on interviews?

Mr. Gennette: We have to even if it's an interim, right?

Mr. Rosenblum: Maybe ask for interest in the community for those that would like to apply for it and do an interview process as we have done in the past.

Mr. Gennette: This is for the Chairperson, right?

Mr. Silva: We had that too but I'm pretty sure we appointed somebody as well.

Mr. Gennette: We did.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would double check.

Mr. Goncalves: This is a really important position, like somebody mentioned before, and we should be looking to get somebody that's qualified and knowledgeable on this. I would say if we're able to appoint somebody then we need to get a letter out and ask for people to submit letters of interest and set up the interviews.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would ask for a resume too.

Mr. Gennette: Last time I seem to remember we had a lot of residents that came in to support different people but let's make it clear that this is an interview, this isn't an election of popular vote.

Board to approve the extended liquor hours for Super Bowl Sunday, February 9, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve the extended liquor hours for the Super Bowl Sunday, February 9, 2025, as we've done previously and as printed here. All alcoholic beverages to be removed by 2:00 a.m. with the exception of employees, must be off the premises no later than 2:00 a.m.. No open bar in accordance with ABCC Happy Hour regulations. Super Bowl Sunday only. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to vote to adopt a 24-hour per day, 7-day per week heavy commercial vehicle exclusion for Stivens Terrace, Mountainview Street and Pleasantview Street.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to adopt a 24-hour per day, 7-day per week heavy commercial vehicle exclusion for Stivens Terrace, Mountainview Street and Pleasantview Street. **Mr. Gennette second.**

Mr. Gennette: They've been fighting over there on Stivens to get this. I'm happy to see this came through. I just want to state that I don't know if this goes to the state again. They have to do it because of 21. This isn't going to happen tomorrow but the state came back and said yes so we have to get it in place. I'm really happy to see this come through.

Mr. Silva: I'm happy to see it. I'm sure we've all noticed that the traffic now going down Center Street backs up to Pleasant Street and that's why some are taking this. Now what is going to happen with this traffic now that no commercial vehicles are going down there? It's going to add more traffic to that light. It would be nice to somehow, I believe the state sets the light time on Chapin.

Mr. Goncalves: Yes it is.

Mr. Silva: Hopefully we can get them to look at that as well. It's getting bad.
All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Board to discuss police overtime policy.

Mr. Strange: For the past 2-3 years the police overtime budget has been a little bit of an issue. There is a special article that gets presented at Town Meeting to use free cash to cover over expenditures for police overtime budget. It's been between \$100,000 and last year was \$220,000. We've spoken to the PD, the Chief, and there's no indication that there's been any efforts in earnest to try to stay within the budget. Currently they're overspent on their overtime budget and we're only halfway through the fiscal year. They're about 70% spent on their regular overtime, where if they're on pace it should be a little more than half. It's apparent that we're heading again towards an over-expenditure for police OT. It may very well be that police needs an increase in their overtime budgets. It's kind of hard to tell because getting answers and information has been a little bit of a struggle. One thing we know with other respect to both the Chief and Police Department is there doesn't seem to be a willingness to abide by the overtime budget. The thought was in speaking with some of the Selectmen and Town Counsel is coming up with some sort of additional step that would require overtime approval. Not police officer's calling in sick but sort of the longer-term stuff that requires a lead time for making requests. That's 1 for regular OT than the additional training. The Massachusetts POST Commission requires a minimum amount of training and we don't know exactly what is the minimum that is required by POST and what is discretionary wants in terms of training. Of course, we want our police officers to be as well trained as possible. We want all of our employees to be as well trained as possible; however, we do live in a budget environment that is very restrictive, as we've spoken about. Our Town Counsel is taking a look at what we could possibly do to have the board be the final arbiter on respective requests for overtime. We were expecting to have some sort of draft policy so you could take a look at it and tear it up or accept it. I'm concerned we're again looking at potentially having to use free cash to try and balance our budget along with some other options. If we have to go and dip in for another \$100-\$150-\$200,000 in free cash that's not a sustainable model. That's where I'm at in terms of managing the budget. I'd love to hear any of the Board's thoughts about if this is something we should pursue and if not any other thoughts you might have in terms of getting the budget back on.

Mr. Gennette: It seems to me this is the biggest budget we've ever had with the police department above and beyond what a normal growth cycle would be, we're better staffed than we've ever been before. We've gone above and beyond and it seems to me that previous departments have been able to manage without throwing money at everything. They've been able to handle their overtime, their calls and everything like that. I don't know because I wasn't on the Board before so I'm wondering what your perception of where we were with previous leadership vs the financial burdens now.

Mr. Rosenblum: Derek can probably attest to this; I know our call volume has gone through the roof. Watching it the last couple years and with Covid it went up. I haven't seen call volumes since Covid. I wouldn't mind seeing a chart on the call volume.

Mr. Gennette: That would be an indicator. I don't know previously what the situation has been with past Chief's.

Mr. Silva: This has always been problematic. The previous Chief's, some of them had issues at certain points, if I'm not mistaken. Probably not as drastic as this. In speaking with the Chief, he says he has no control over it. It's just stuff that happens and he's got to place his patrolmen where he's got to place them. I don't know exactly how that works. You probably know better than I do what the requirements are for certain things. It's difficult unless you know exactly what to put in place. Can't we have a budget saying this is it. You have your \$300,000 or whatever it may be for your overtime budget and if that gets expended you're going to have to come back and get some money transferred. By having the money transferred it's a way of saying can this happen.

Mr. Gennette: That's what we're talking about now. Planning on using this overage from free cash.

Mr. Silva: Any idea why Agawam is so low on their percentage of overtime?

Mr. Strange: Nobody wants to do overtime. I spoke to the mayor.

Mr. Silva: Same with Wilbraham?

Mr. Strange: I don't know about Wilbraham.

Mr. Silva: We definitely have to curb it, especially now that we're in dire straits.

Mr. Strange: To provide some perspective on how it plays out, the line items, unless the accountant cuts them off and says, typically what will happen is they'll put in a request and the accountant will see it in the red and they'll reject the request for appropriation. I don't know that's going to happen. If that doesn't happen then at the end of the year there will be a transfer either intra departmental or inter departmental from other accounts that have extra money, which would be totally fine, not ideal, if it wasn't for the extra free cash that we have to ask for. That's really the killer. A lot of the departments have to move money around but it's the additional free cash that's the killer.

Mr. Rosenblum: Could this be better management of vacation time? Looking at the entire budget and line items within the police budget, they might not be totally expended historically, it may be budgeting those less and bringing that money into overtime. When I work with Munis and I'm looking at my budgets, I'll see a line item for 3 years hasn't been hitting the number, I reduce it down which gives me other line items I can increase. In a municipality around March or April you can start and looking at moving between line items within a departmental budget.

Mr. Strange: The Chief alluded to this at FinCom, we break up our categories through personal services and general expenses so you can move money within line items within personal services and within general expenses without having to get approval from FinCom. It's when you have to move money from general expenses into personal services or if you have to bring money in from employee benefits to compensate for an over-expenditure in one of those categories. If it's just an expenditure in these line items that we can take care of, that happens in a lot of departments, that's not a problem. We can deal with that. It's the extra money and the free cash that is a safety blanket that we've gotten used to. It's not a good practice.

Mr. Rosenblum: You have accounts and purchase orders. If you have landscaping and machinery and you're going to be short on machinery you're going to take it from landscaping if you see that you're not going to have it. For me, I have to go through procurement, finance and accounting and my department head and say I want to make this transfer. They'll look at it and 99.9% of the time they'll say yes and it goes through the process of being moved.

Mr. Strange: For example, for whatever reason, we've been charging some of our IT stuff to 1 line item and it's way over spent and we have another line item that has the money in it that's way under spent. There's tracking to make sure that at the end of the year we can make that transfer and still have enough money. It's just a matter of managing the amounts. It's not ideal but that's what towns do.

Mr. Rosenblum: Did you have anything on the vacation I mentioned?

Mr. DeBarge: I don't think it's that.

Mr. Goncalves: At the end of the day we're short police officers, right? We have spots that need to be filled.

Mr. Gennette: We're full.

Mr. Goncalves: How are we full and still have overtime?

Mr. Gennette: He's planning on asking for more officers.

Mr. DeBarge: I don't know how it works over there now. I haven't been there since 2015. I can tell you how it worked when I was there. I happened to be a firearms instructor when I was there and I scheduled a lot of training. I scheduled every officer for their annual firearms training and a lot of other classes. I knew what each officer cost for overtime and I knew what the shift cost was for overtime so I'm pretty well versed in the overtime expenditure, at least what it cost at the time. Under Chief McGowan, knowing that I was doing the training he would tell me we're out of money, no training. We would get a department wide email around April saying he was balancing his budget. He would say I will be balancing the budget for 2 weeks, no overtime is authorized, if overtime is needed for officer safety or a public safety event then it would be for comp time or something like that. It was managed that way. If there wasn't money to do it, you didn't do it. POST changes everything. I do understand the requirements. If it was up to me, I'd fund the police department for qualifying with their firearms 4 times a year because I think that's more necessary

than a lot of other stuff. They have to be trained. They have to continue that but because of the requirements of POST you're getting a lot of overtime there. My question would be with the overages of overtime, if you had to tier it, if you had to say number one thing in police overtime is for public safety. You have a minimum number of officers on the street if you don't meet that requirement of minimum officers due to injuries, sick, vacation and comp time you fill that with overtime. If you're not willing to move anybody around on shifts then you have to maintain that minimum manning standard for public safety. Minimum manning could be what the Chief designates. It's their purview for public safety. Any police chief could now say I'm now saying minimum mandatory requirements on the street are 5 officers instead of 4 and they'd have to come to the ones that carry the purse and ask for more officers. My question would be is the non-POST required training, what is that budget. Another disclaimer, if I got a chance to do training when I was there I would jump at it no matter what it was so I don't blame anybody wanting to go to training. As stated by James and everybody else, the other departments stay within their budget. The main question is why can't this department do that and how do we remedy that. It seems like we're in a situation where the police department is saying we need more officers and it could possibly cut down on the overtime, as we have heard that in the past. Past practice shows that doesn't really happen. I don't know where the Board wants to go from here. The main thing is, if this was the DPW or another department then you could say you're pulling money from another department. It's what you're basically doing. We have this certain pot of money for the entire town and you expect every department to stay within their budget so we know what's going on. Sooner or later, if it's not managed by this board, who isn't going to get the idea that the police department can do what they want and nobody else can because this board doesn't do anything to at least try to get down to the reason why it's happening each and every year. I think that's what we have to ask ourselves. Manny had a great idea. You mentioned if the overtime budget is a certain number, once that number is reached then anything not requiring public safety, officer safety, would have to come to the board.

Mr. Silva: You have to request it from the board to do that line-item change. Talking about changing it from another line or another department, wherever we can find the money, it has to be requested, otherwise, it doesn't happen.

Mr. Rosenblum: Is there a way we can see the last 3 years of line-item expenditures for the police department and maybe see if there's areas they're not spending it? Where if they're historically staying under budget in an area that might be \$50,000 or \$25,000, like when we went to the school and were trying to find money. We found things that were back but I think we need a historical view of their budget to know which line items they might be short or they might not be spending as much of.

Mr. Gennette: I think your call volume idea is a good idea.

Mr. Rosenblum: We did get call volume numbers 2-3 years ago. I'm not saying they're wrong or right but just to show. If we can find the money within the budget that might be a starting spot. Also, maybe we create thresholds and once you hit that bucket of money then you have to come to us and show the extenuating circumstances and if it is public safety and we don't have enough on the street, maybe there's a drug boom in town.

Mr. Goncalves: I don't think somebody is going to come from the police department and tell us this is scheduled overtime and we know it's going to happen because if they know it's going to happen as regularly as it's happening, they would be able to fix it. I think this is more of it's happening as it's happening.

Mr. DeBarge: That's fine, it's just managing the budget. Maybe you don't let somebody go to a training that's not necessary.

Mr. Goncalves: We can't manage that here.

Mr. DeBarge: If you're talking about a certain threshold and you can't go over it other than emergencies.

Mr. Gennette: He may not have an option whether or not he can skip a training. Police reform has been making it so.

Mr. DeBarge: Right, but there are trainings that are not required.

Mr. Gennette: I understand that but if he has to send people based on state mandates he has no option whether or not people go to training.

Mr. DeBarge: If it's not POST required.

Mr. Goncalves: It's happening here, it's not happening in Agawam or Wilbraham. Why is it happening here. They all have to do the same training.

Mr. Silva: Should we send a letter notifying there will be no overtime unless it's a mandated overtime based on over expenditure of the funds?

Mr. DeBarge: I think the language would have to be specific to non-emergency.

Mr. Goncalves: If Chief Valadas wants to talk about it he can come in.

Mr. Rosenblum: Is there any kind of state grant systems through POST?

Mr. Strange: I emailed the Chief and Lt. Irwin because I think Irwin is in charge of the grants. They got a 9-1-1 grant. I'm not quite sure if it's an accounting thing because in years past they haven't gone so far over the dispatch budget. I know they've gotten the 9-1-1 grant before. Accounting wise it's not something you put back into that account because it's an expense account. If you go back historically and look at that line item it's not overspent like that. When we get grants...

Mr. Rosenblum: We spend it first and then they reimburse us.

Mr. Strange: I asked for the application to see if they're delineating. Lt. didn't get on until 4 so I didn't expect him to get back to me today and the Chief is out today. Hopefully I can get that information and we can share it with you guys.

Mr. Rosenblum: Looking at the whole budget and seeing if there's areas they're not spending we might find \$50-\$60,000.

Board to discuss and possibly approve \$6,600 in 40R funding for Munis trash billing.

Mr. Strange: We're still above \$300,000 in 40R. This is money well spent. Our consultant from Capital Strategic Solutions is going to create new accounts in Munis that will allow us to bill trash more than once a year in the event that the trash fee does increase instead of hitting residents with a one-time increased fee we can bill them quarterly or bi-annually to mitigate the impact.

Mr. Silva: How is Munis coming along? Last I heard, they're a nightmare. Speaking with some of the personnel...

Mr. Strange: They're very finicky. The reason the billing has been delayed is there is a lot of data that gets populated in our CAMA database, which is the Assessors database, and that information gets transferred to Munis. There's so many different areas where the data can get lost. The good news is we have this consultant online who has been money well spent. We also have ITP. They used to work for Munis and they are experts. Instead of having to put in a ticket with Munis and you don't know when you're going to get a response, these guys are all over it. They're responsive and have been really helpful. Once we get past this billing stuff I think we're going to be in good shape. It's a layered database that is not user friendly. Unless you know exactly where you're going in that program it's difficult. They cornered the market years ago and we have 30 years of institutional data. We get calls once in a while for ERP systems that want to compete and it's such a huge undertaking.

Mr. Rosenblum: A few weeks ago, at the Senior Center at Tea with the TA that was their biggest question about the bills being late.

Motion made by Mr. Goncalves to approve \$6,600 in 40R funding for Munis Trash billing work. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

Board to discuss and possibly approve 40R funding to pay Tyler Technologies for work associated with connecting CAMA database with Munis for property billing purposes.

Mr. Strange: This is \$14,000.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve 40R funding to pay Tyler Technologies for work associated with connecting CAMA database with Munis for property billing purposes for \$14,000.9

Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2025 FEB 19 A 10:43
TOWN OF LUDELOW

Board to discuss and possibly vote to appropriate \$15,000 in additional 40R funding for ITP for Munis technical support services.

Mr. Strange: ITP is Integrated Technology Partners. They are a firm of former Munis employees.

Mr. Gennette: Is this a subscription service?

Mr. Strange: No.

Mr. Gennette: This is a one-time purchase?

Mr. Strange: Yes, the original appropriation was \$9,900 and we ran out of it. It's been a God send for Cheryl, the new Town Accountant. They're the technical back-end people so instead of sending in a ticket to Tyler we can send an email to them. A good example is in our paychecks for some reason random words started appearing so we asked them to take a look at it and they were able to go into the back end and take a look.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to appropriate \$15,000 in additional 40R funding for ITP for Munis technical support services. **Mr. Goncalves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

CLOSING COMMENTS

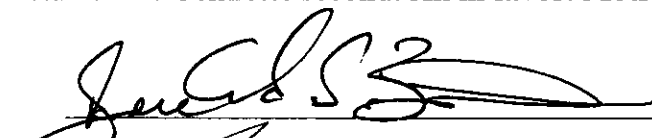
Mr. Goncalves: Regarding the spam going on right now. It's at an all-time high. The police department might have put something online in one of the social platforms. Everybody I know is getting a toll bridge fine on their phones lately. E-Z Pass or Turnpike will never ask anybody for that type of payment from a text. In Indian Orchard/Wilbraham there has been a rash of credit card readers going in with scam ones over pumps. A lot of seniors that may not be up to snuff on technology will use a PIN, which just opens the card up wide open. There's no recourse at that point for recovering. The tap is fine. When you put in the PIN it's 10x's the work to get the money back. It's tax season and everybody is going to start getting calls from the IRS that you owe them money. The IRS won't call you up looking for any money.

Mr. Rosenblum: Make sure your cars are locked at night because they're starting to hit cars again. Usually, it's just looking for loose change. Make sure your cars are locked if they're parked outside. I've seen a bunch of instances where that has been happening again.

Mr. Gennette: I'm pretty happy to see Stivens Terrace is moving along. Stay warm.

Mr. Silva: Stay warm, check on your neighbors.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to close regular session at 6:47 p.m. and enter back into executive session and not return. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**


Chairperson
