

The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 15, 2025, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Board of Selectmen's Conference Room at the Town Hall.

Members Present: Manuel Silva, William Rosenblum, Anthony Alves, and James Gennette

Members Absent:

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to open the Selectmen meeting at 5:31 p.m. Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Silva: I'd like to take a moment to honor our departed colleague and have a moment of silence. I'd like to thank the staff for the memorial.

VISITATIONS

5:35 p.m. – Paul Ziemba, Setronics – To discuss the security camera system for the Town.

Mr. Ziemba: My name is Paul Ziemba and I'm with Setronics and this is my associate Jamie McDonald. Jamie and I have been talking to Marc Strange about updating the cameras and video surveillance system that you have in Town. Setronics is a Massachusetts based company out of Billerica in Eastern Massachusetts. We've been in business for 56 years. We cover the whole Northeast United States to Maryland. We don't manufacture anything but we design security systems for businesses. We do everything from local convenience stores to Amherst College to anything in between. What we're looking at in Town is you've got approximately 80-90 cameras throughout the Town. Right now, they're coming into a rather rudimentary video management system. The video management software is the main thing we are proposing that we upgrade. Exact Vision is the product we're going to recommend. As an electronic systems integrator we work with many different companies and have a number of video management systems. We feel Exact Vision is a good fit. It's very easy to use. I understand that right now when you need to look at some video and retrieve video you contact Matt who comes in on Tuesdays and Thursdays. With the Exact Vision system what we can do is make the videos available to anybody in the Town that you choose to have see it. Everybody would have a login and that gets permissions as to what it is that we can do. You can do anything from a full admin who has full control over the system all the way down to a receptionist who just wants to look at a camera in the parking lot in the winter when it gets dark at 4:30 to see if it's safe to go out to her car. When you log in it controls what you can do. We currently have this system at Westover Golf Course.

Mr. McDonald: Westover went out to bid last fall. We won the bid and this is what we chose to put in there. We thought it was a good idea to continue with that so the platform is the same throughout the city.

Mr. Ziemba: You could have any number of recorders. You will probably eventually need 3 recorders to take in all the cameras. What we're proposing is to put one recorder in now. Most of the cameras you have now are somewhere between 7-8 years old and up. By putting in a new recorder we're able to tie in all your existing cameras and evaluate what you have. Then we can progressively update things as we go until we eventually have all the cameras in the city. I wanted to give you an idea of what today's cameras are capable of doing and how the video management software works. I have a sample video. This is a 180-degree camera. The 2 cameras I'm going to show you are the 2 cameras you have at Westover. On the left side you can see one side of the building and that's 180 degrees all the way over to the other side. This is designed to give you situational recognition of what's going on in an area. You notice this car is coming up on the entrance. If I wanted to zoom in on this car I could zoom in digitally but because I have such a wide field of view I'm not going to be able to get any details off of that vehicle. I can draw a box around an area of interest and I can get a little closer view of that car. With 180-degree field of view you are not going to get the kind of detail you need; however, I have this camera over here. These 2 cameras are mounted one right above the other. This is about 400' away from the camera and I'm able to clearly identify the license plate.

Mr. McDonald: The Golf Course has had a series of theft in the parking lot so we shot the parking lot with 180-degree cameras to get the situational awareness and the point where everyone goes in

and out of has one of these on them. You have an inventory of those cameras downstairs. You purchased some additional cameras 7 years ago. They're still there and we can help utilize them. I can connect any number of locations.

Mr. Ziemba: On a typical system you would have I can select how many cameras I want to see at a time. If I'm looking at 30-40 cameras and I want to see a particular thing you kind of have information overload. There's too much to look at at once. There's a number of things in this Exact Vision software that make it easy for you to find what you want to look at. I'm looking at 30 cameras and you have 3 times that number of cameras in the Town. If you're looking at all those cameras you can't concentrate on one thing. I have something called views and I can select which view I want. Another way you can easily manage the cameras so you can see quickly what you want is you can come over to maps and I have a floor plan of our office for example and if I want to see the hallway I just click on it. If I want to see the exterior cameras I can color code any of these. If I'm looking at this and I want to go back to something that happened recently I have a menu of different things I can choose from. We're not recording something constantly that's not of any consequence. We want to see if anybody comes up to the cars. Another view we're looking at a main picture and live picture and something 30 seconds ago. With this software it's really simple to save anything. You're essentially ready to save something in 3 clicks. You don't have to call others in to do it and I can train anybody to be an expert in this in about an hour. That's a quick thumbnail of what we want to do for the Town. We want to start by putting in 1 network video recorder which can accommodate around 64 cameras. Whoever set up your system in the Town really like fisheye cameras so I'm going to show you the way a fisheye camera works. You've got a bunch of them here in Town already. This is a Town in New Hampshire. This is the way a fisheye camera looks. Right now, because you don't have a video management software that handles this well, this is the way all of your fisheye cameras look. With this software there's a number of different things we can do to make it easier to look at. I can de-work that camera and now I can look around at any spot. I can zoom in, zoom out. There's some different options. I like one called dual view. This camera is looking 180 degrees at the back of the garage and 180 degrees at the front of the garage. It's always recording everything in that 360-degree circle. Right now, with the fisheye cameras you have now there's a couple issues. One is you can't manage it. You just look at a round circle and if you ever had to save anything it would be very difficult to get some actionable video. The other issue you have is up at Whitney Park, these cameras are not really designed to be an exterior camera and you have a bunch of them outside. If you have this camera on the side of a building automatically 50% of your picture is looking at the sky where nothing is ever going to happen. If you have a 12-megapixel camera 50% of your video is wasted. What I would suggest with the fisheye cameras is they should be redeployed somewhere inside a building where you can make better use of them. The camera I showed you at the beginning was a cemetery in Salem, MA and the one that zoomed in on that plate at 300-400', you have several of those cameras sitting in boxes downstairs just waiting to be deployed. Any parking lots or areas where you want to be able to look at an entrance and identify vehicles that are coming in, you've already got those cameras. We can tie them into this system and you'll get the view that I showed you.

Mr. McDonald: It's all about situational awareness shots. The specific shots let you know who did it.

Mr. Gennette: Can these identify specific plates? We have a leaf drop off and one of our biggest problems is knowing who has a sticker and who doesn't. Can you identify things as they're coming in?

Mr. Ziemba: Yes you can. I've done that same thing for the Town of Southbridge. The trucks that were coming through the transfer station, they linked the sticker to a spreadsheet with the license plate so the camera would read every license plate and it would automatically know if that was valid or not. In 15 minutes, I can't tell you everything the system does but with these license plate cameras, there is a software that you would have to put in it to make that work to associate to a spreadsheet. If you had a situation where somebody in the building had a restraining order against their significant other, if you have an access control system to get into a building, if somebody drives into the parking lot, the camera can read the license plate, it can associate that with a spreadsheet, it can see this person is on a restricted list, it can send a message to security.

Mr. McDonald: We've done a lot of that in the public housing area.

Ms. Ribeiro: You said that it could lock the doors in that instance. Would it be able to lock the doors at night at a certain time?

Mr. McDonald: Your access control system can do that without the cameras. We didn't want to deal with that until we get this figured out. The software is 7 years old. I don't think the firmware has been touched. It's one step at a time. Anything you want to do on the access side is pretty easy to deal with. With integration, the alerts creates an event and you can tell other things to happen from there. Like a panic button.

Mr. Ziemba: We thought the best solution for you folks was to start at the inside the heart of the system with a recorder and video management software and work your way out to the cameras and other buildings.

Mr. McDonald: We can utilize some of the stuff you already have purchased. The next one would probably be the police department. They have a very old system but that would be on its own network.

Mr. Silva: That was my question. Have you gone to the police department to see what they need?

Mr. McDonald: We'd use the same platform for privacy issues, but that's all done with a login.

Mr. Ziemba: If you want the cameras in the police station only to be seen by the police, that's controlled by login, but you might want the police to see every camera in town.

Mr. McDonald: It can be event driven too.

Mr. Ziemba: This is Chenier's Gravel Bank. It's the same camera I showed you before at the park and cemetery. As a test I went online and measured where the gravel meets the pavement is approximately 500'. I was interested in seeing if it would go further. I can optically zoom in on an area. This plate is 500' away. I was standing here hitting a button and as the vehicle came closer I hit a button to make the camera go out a little bit further. As you can see, 500' was no problem for this camera. You have in a box downstairs several of these same cameras. What we offered to Marc is we would come in and bench test them, upgrade the firmware and you'll have those available.

Mr. Gennette: Do you need anything from us today, or is this just a presentation?

Mr. McDonald: We have all the information on there so you can deal with that. A lot of this technology is built in other areas of the world so if you wanted to make sure your costs were real I wouldn't dilly dally too long.

Mr. Gennette: We don't have the luxury of being a rich community, especially right now.

Mr. Ziemba: What we were proposing as a starting point that Jamie and I gave to Marc is we could put in a network video recorder with 18 licenses. You could bring in 18 cameras and we could get those set up in Town Hall or any camera that's coming into Town Hall on your feed and it would be just under \$10,000.

Mr. McDonald: We're a state contract vendor so that's in the ITT 71 contract.

CORRESPONDENCE

61. Planning Board – Memorandum – Reorganization.

Mr. Gennette: On April 11, 2025, the reorganization of the Planning Board is as follows. Raymond Phoenix Chairman, Christopher Coelho Vice Chairman, Kathleen Houle Secretary, Joshua Carpenter Member, and Joel Silva Member.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to file. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

62. Board of Assessors – Memorandum – Reorganization.

Mr. Gennette: On March 31, 2025, the reorganization of the Assessors are as follows. Antonio Rosa Chairman, Michael O'Rourke Clerk, John Urban Member.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to file. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

62. Town Clerk – Letter informing the Governor will be signing the extension to the remote meeting law to extend current provisions until June 30, 2027.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to file. Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

63. Planning Board – Letter requesting information about the possibility of restarting teleconferencing for remote participation.

Mr. Silva: It was mentioned earlier we implemented that several years ago but we never dissolved it. At this point it's still enforced. I don't know if we would be going with the state recommendation as they did or we would curtail it.

Mr. Rosenblum: I'll read it. Dear Mr. Silva, at their meeting of March 27, 2025, the Planning Board discussed the need for remote meetings in the Town as Governor Healy recently extended hybrid and remote public meeting access until June 2027. In the grand scheme of things regarding transparency and accessibility in general as a government, the first step is letting people have better access to be heard as well as expediting the permitting approval process. Notably, according to Town Counsel, even allowing just board members to participate remotely requires that the public also be able to join remotely. As you may remember, it was not that long ago that the Town had the ability to accommodate this but that appears to have been abandoned. The Planning Board would like information from you as to the possibility of restarting some type of teleconferencing where people are able to remotely participate for both increased public participation and for the increased ability for board members to join when they happen to be taken away from the area for work or other legitimate reasons. The board would like to know if there's any willingness or intention to reestablish the ability to participate remotely. If so, the board would like to know if there's a timeline or implementation plan to do so. If not, the board would like to have a clear understanding as to what was factored into that decision why it is in the public interest at this time in deciding against increased ability to participate and what might serve to change that opinion. Thank you for your consideration in this matter. Sincerely, Susan Urban, Administrative Assistant. I don't think we ever abandoned it. I think most boards moved away from it. I don't see why there isn't any reason why we couldn't do it again. That would also mean that we have to set this up every evening and for every board. The question is, is it optional per board or committee or do we do it across the board?

Ms. Ribeiro: My understanding is that we have the ability to do this now. It would have to be through a teams meeting and we'd have to make the link on the agenda so that anybody that wants to participate remotely would be able to join that teams link.

Mr. Gennette: But there's no bylaw to do that? It's not a mandatory thing.

Ms. Ribeiro: You could do it now.

Mr. Gennette: If the Planning Board wanted to do this that's up to them. It's fine. The bylaws allow for it.

Mr. Rosenblum: I'd do the same thing. I have a commission meeting tomorrow night and it's all on teams. The meeting is remote and anyone has the opportunity to get in because there's a link and a dial in. I don't think we ever abandoned it.

Mr. Gennette: I would say leave it up to the boards to do that. In particular, with the School Committee, they could get 100 people at a meeting. The only caveat to that is that you cannot close the doors to an open meeting. You can't close the doors and go virtual. You have to be available for the community to walk in.

Mr. Silva: That served a great purpose during Covid. Right now, I'd like to see the boards get together. When we were calling in I always had an issue. Unless it's a lot better than it was I didn't care for it at all.

Mr. Gennette: So, you're saying at the board's discretion?

Mr. Silva: I don't think there's anything we need to do since we didn't stop it. If they would like to proceed they sure can.

Ms. Ribeiro: As long as the access and how they can remotely participate is listed on the agenda.

Mr. Alves: Can we ensure that the capabilities are available?

Mr. Silva: Carrie, can you make a note that we send them a letter telling them our opinion?

64. Request from the Ludlow Memorial Day Parade Committee to hold the 2nd annual Children's Bike Parade & Safety Rodeo at the Riverwalk on May 24th.

Mr. Gennette: We received a letter from Ron Saloio, who happens to be here. It says Good Afternoon, I would once again like to request permission to hold the 2nd annual Children's Bike Parade and Safety Rodeo on the Riverwalk. The Ludlow Parade Committee will also work closely with the LPD, who acquired a grant again this year for safety equipment to go out and we'll work with them in regard to safety coverage as we did last year. The date we are looking at is May 24 from 8:00 a.m. set up, 10:00 a.m. start and ending around noon at the Iron Duke parking lot. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns and if there's anything to get approved from the Board of Selectmen. Thank you, Ron Saloio.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to approve the request from the Ludlow Memorial Day Parade Committee to hold the 2nd annual Children's Bike Parade & Safety Rodeo at the Riverwalk on May 24th as designed in the correspondence. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Ms. Collette: We had a great time. It was something that was started with the 250th and we got a great response and we want to continue.

65. Springfield Water & Sewer Commission – Water quality violation and public notification.

Mr. Gennette: I did some communicating with Marc about this and it is a pretty regular occurrence. It's aggravating that this is a regular occurrence. It's a notification of the quality and it could be better. One of our problems with the Springfield Water & Sewer and we have the reservoir here is that we have no representation on the Springfield Water Committee. We're hoping in the future to remedy that. I just wanted to take the opportunity to say that we think we need to be represented at the Springfield Water & Sewer Commission.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second.**

Mr. Rosenblum: As before, this type of violation is not an immediate health hazard.

Mr. Silva: I believe that all residents that have water from Springfield all get one of those notices.

All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

66. MASS DOT – Bridge Inspection Reports Holyoke Street/Higher Brook and Piney Lane/Broad Brook.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

67. MASS DOT – Bridge Inspection Report West Street/Higher Brook.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to file. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

67. Request from Paul Gatesman to become an Election Worker.

Mr. Alves: I'm assuming if we have this request there's a need for it.

Mr. Silva: There would be a need and usually they make a request to the Town Clerk and she OK's it.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to approve the request from Paul Gatesman to become an election worker. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

68. CMG Environmental, Inc. – Notice of Permanent Solution Statement and Immediate Response Action Completion – Nouria Gas Station, 425 Center Street.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to file. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

69. Board to accept Student Awareness of Fire Education and Senior SAFE program grants in the amount of \$5,700 & \$2,400.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to accept the accept Student Awareness of Fire Education and Senior SAFE program grants in the amount of \$5,700 & \$2,400 respectively and thank you to the fire department who worked on obtaining these. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

70. Letter of resignation from Cameron Covill, Conservation Commission. Board to post vacancy.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to accept the letter of resignation from Cameron Covill and thank you for your time on the Conservation Commission. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Silva: Are we going to be OK with the Conservation Commission? We've had a lot of movement and we need a certain number of members to do the actual work.

Ms. Ribeiro: This creates a 3rd vacancy.

71. Letter from Ryan Linton, Westover Golf Course, notifying Board of Kire Trajkovski's 4-year term expiration on April 30, 2025. Board to post vacancy.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to post the vacancy for a 4-year term on the Westover Golf Commission. **Mr. Alves second.**

Mr. Alves: It says he's agreed to stay on until his replacement is appointed. That would be beyond his term. Do we need to take any action to approve temporarily?

Ms. Ribeiro: I can check into that.

Mr. Silva: Unless we renominate them, which is something we don't do.

Mr. Rosenblum: Right now, they have 5 members. I think they're fine with the 5 members so we'll have to post the vacancy.

All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

Mr. Alves: I'd still be interested in that answer, Carrie. Just in case we have a vacancy and a board is without a quorum.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to discuss and possibly vote on FY26 Budget recommendation (tabled).

Mr. Silva: We have some information from Marc and we are still in a deficit and we have a notice from the school that they looked at their budget and they're coming in at a little reduction trying to help the town out with our issue.

Mr. Gennette: It's a reduction of their increase. With that we're still going to be short.

Mr. Silva: It's a \$70,000 reduction of the increase and that would bring us down to \$520,000 we're still short. There is another \$78,000 adjustment. That's if we delay the HVAC.

Mr. Gennette: I have a hard time going to Town Meeting and telling them we're going to do a 3.8-million-dollar HVAC project at the public safety complex. That is going out to bond and that bond would have an interest rate associated with it and that payment I don't think we can secure right now. I think 3.8 million dollars for a project that 4 years ago was \$540,000 is an awfully big increase and I think we need to revisit this project and see what's changed so much to take such a big increase in the cost of the project. I don't think we have the money to do it. Everybody is coming to the table. The DPW is taking a 0% increase and I talked to them about it. Are they going to be OK with that and they said we'll do what we have to do. They were very stoic about it. I'm so impressed with the DPW to take one on the chin and I hope everybody remembers that next year. They said they saw it coming and they've been trying to buckle their laces. Kudos to the DPW. The town itself is getting another \$100 fee on their trash and the 2 ½ is still going to hit so the community is stepping up and the school has offered \$70,000 back. For me, if all of these come together then I think all of the departments have done a wonderful job of trying to get this down as low as possible. I think if we do pull the HVAC unit and we get down to just over \$400,000 and if we do that I would be OK with putting that on free cash. I don't like doing free cash. It's not a good practice.

Mr. Silva: I agree with you and I don't want the increase for the trash.

Mr. Gennette: It still doesn't cover the trash bill. Half of it is still on the taxes.

Mr. Silva: With the free cash we got a little extra money.

Mr. Gennette: Certified free cash came in at a little over 5 million, which is an increase from before. Free cash comes from multiple areas. Some of it is back from department underspending but also with our PILOT program, property in lieu of taxes. We get money from all the solar panels so they start generating a little bit of revenue from us that is not part of our 2 ½ proposition. Those avenues for revenue are important. We're trying to put together a strategic team with the Finance Committee and the other departments in town to be able to figure out how we need to best work through our system so we don't keep running into these problems.

Mr. Silva: We have some of the School Committee here and I know it was a tough thing for you to do.

Mr. Tiano: The committee did reconvene last night.

Mr. Rosenblum: Obviously we have correspondence that goes back and forth and the one thing I wanted to make clear is that we talked about 3%. I opened up the discussions at 4% understanding that down the road you are going to have possibly 40 students coming in. That was the estimate on the new project by Harris Brook. My recommendation was to go to 4% and then we got hit with the insurance. This request was across the board. Not to say we singled out schools but we went to every department and asked them to eat a little. We have other things on the agenda and probably say no to that we would have probably said yes to. I wanted to put that out in the open that this was across all departments.

Mr. Silva: We've had a couple years where there was zero. I'm hoping and think the insurance is not going to be the same next year.

Ms. Bowler: What happens if it's worse. What is our plan for long term for the insurance? Are we looking at hiring deductibles, increasing the percentage rates?

Mr. Rosenblum: It's going to be happening. If you look at all the other communities there's only one that has a higher municipal share and that's Ware. We're 78/22. Most everywhere else is 70/30 and some are 68/32.

Mr. Gennette: Some are 50/50.

Mr. Rosenblum: On our PPO we're 78/22 where most communities if they're 60/40 or 70/30 they're going 60/40 on their PPO. We worked with the IAC. Long term plan 3-5 years down the road is to be at 70/30. It's an unnecessary evil. I think we can save 1.4 million dollars if we go to 70/30. Does it stink, yeah, but we're in line with everybody else and we're still where we need to be. When we first negotiated this we were 81/19 and all of the unions except for the teacher's union at 75/25. They came back at 78/22 so we maneuvered everyone up. I hear it. I know tons of teachers that say their pay vs what the benefits are a huge plus in this town. I'd like to revisit the buyout plan again. The town would give \$5,000 if you went off of insurance and there was 1 person. It's \$25-\$35,000 worth of benefits for 1 person. These are all things that will be on the table. It's unfortunate but the insurance came in at 14.84% and we negotiated on the average and that was the average. A lot of communities are getting 20-22%. There's so many costs that we have no control over. Chapter 70 funding. The state doesn't do you any favors. I watched Jake and I thought it was a great speech he had, I agree with him 100%. If he needed someone to go down to advocate I would because it comes back to us. What happens if we have an insurance increase next year and we haven't done anything with our insurance splits, people lose jobs. We don't want that. Thank you for your contribution. I'm happy to see that it's level services. We don't want anyone to lose jobs. We could fund the schools as much as we possibly could and that's what we want to do. Thank you for the 70, it helps.

Ms. Bowler: I think you need to realize that we negotiated a 3-year contract on 3%. That 3% compounds into next year and the year after so now we're looking at 2-3 years down the road depending on what you give us not being able to fund contracts because that 3% was figured into those contract negotiations. We're not going to lose jobs right now but come next year and the next year we don't know what's happening with our federal money coming in because that's a live wire right now.

Mr. Silva: If something drastic happens we're not going to have any way that we can do it other than propose a 2 ½ override. That's the only other mechanism you can do to get funds. Thank God we're not in a position that Belchertown is. They're looking at so many layoffs.

Mr. Rosenblum: It's 2.1 million in the school department and they're looking at 3.3-million-dollar override and that is with adding positions.

Mr. Gennette: I 100% agree with you. We know that right now on the surface it looks like the school is going to get hit the hardest. We're completely aware that there's a lot of pressure from the federal government. We don't know how the state is going to be able to respond. I have to imagine the Governor is going to pull from a lot of different resources and hopefully lessen damage done to the schools but that's part of the reason we're in the practice of skimming it down right now, keeping it as tight to the vest as we can because we don't want to lose as many people as we would if we went up on all of these contracts. If we kept at a breakneck pace like we were going before it's not sustainable. The community can't cover the whole thing so we have to try to figure out what that balance is. Much to what you were talking about we have to figure out a strategy because we all have contracts and they all have terms on them so we need to know what's going to happen with all of those in the next coming years. Maybe this is all good practice and next year it's game on and everybody is back to where we were and we're doing great. Maybe we had some good processes in the middle, maybe we learned some new stuff and we protected our downside a little and we improved the process and communications and we're able to come together and be better as a community and do better as elected officials for our residents.

Ms. Ribeiro: I agree with what Mrs. Bowler said. We do need a long-term but with health insurance this year when we got the increase we did make plan design changes and we did increase the deductible, which saved the town about \$400,000. It's a time crunch. We don't get our insurance increase until the end of January, we have to decide by April to roll that out to the town for open enrollment so you've got a very short window to make significant changes. We've already talked to the IAC and we had a very good conversation about making some changes next year so we're having those conversations already. We can't wait until the end of January, beginning of February to start making those changes but we agree that some of those changes need to be made and those conversations need to be had.

Mr. Rosenblum: I think this all comes down to the open communication. With FinCom we talked about getting a group together. As you said, there was a finance subcommittee, budget subcommittee.

Mr. Gennette: I don't agree with a budget subcommittee; I agree with the Strategic Planning Committee. I think the budget subcommittee was a failure.

Mr. Rosenblum: I think it can be a hybrid of the 2. We've had long-term planning, which we got rid of.

Mr. Gennette: That was long-term capital planning and that was part of Capital Planning. It was 2 pieces of the same board.

Mr. Alves: First is a point of frustration for me and the way our town does our elections coming into this so late and so much has already been decided. I think using free cash is poor policy. I would not agree to anything above the limit of free cash we used last year, which was \$170,000. That has nothing to do with the school department. It is outlined in many areas how it's poor policy from our town's financial policy to state guidelines on uses of free cash to Select Board manuals for the State of Massachusetts. Free cash has specific purposes, capital projects, building our reserves which keeps our cost of borrowing down and plugging the budget with that much free cash is taking quite the risk. Not only do we have to keep up with all these contracts in the future, we have to catch up that amount of free cash that we use. It would also put capital improvements in future years at risk and building things like reserves and the new things we're setting up like turf maintenance at the high school because we're committing more to free cash leaving less available. In my eyes, plugging the budget with that much free cash isn't really a plan, it's hoping that next year we're not in the same predicament and hope is not a plan.

Mr. Gennette: I 100% agree with you the only problem is where do we recover the shortfall. Where is see it right now, it just comes from the big 4; and DPW is already at zero, no increase. You've got to divide it up between the school, police and fire, respectively percentage wise.

Mr. Alves: My thought process at the last meeting was we get that delta as tight as we can, figure out what percent of the budget that is and we go to all departments. There's no favoritism.

Mr. Gennette: I agree but I think when it comes to our accounting department especially who is struggling a lot right now and is short staffed, I don't think they can handle a hit. I've expressed at the last meeting that I do not like going to free cash on any level. My concession is in response to the department's discretion to be able to assist. They've shown that everybody is doing what they can to try to make things better.

Mr. Alves: I don't disagree but we can't afford our bills.

Mr. Gennette: With the current free cash coming in above what we were expecting, over 1.4 million, we're still paying to our stabilization and we're even paying into OPEB, which we have never done before. We stopped for a long time. It was a very minimal amount of money, I think \$250,000. Actually, it's at 1.29 right now. We're still putting in for our reserves. I think there's a little bit of an argument there. I'm not going to fight you on not doing free cash but that means we have to tell the departments they have to cut.

Mr. Alves: Going back to capital projects, that's 1.4 we could be using on investments in the town. That's 1.4 we could apply towards a park. We could go back to that list of capital requests and approve them. It's not good fiscal policy.

Mr. Silva: I agree. We stopped doing that. We did it for many years to reduce the tax rate and the taxpayers rebelled. They had meetings and they were adamant that something had to be done. The state has recommendations on what the reserves should be and we are putting money in the reserves. I don't think we're low on the reserves but by the increase that we got it will help us here and there but we need help right now. To go back to the boards, it's a little late.

Mr. Gennette: We can close the warrant tonight. FinCom is planning on meeting tomorrow and they're hoping to have budget numbers.

Mr. Silva: Did we not request they go back and look and see if they could find something?

Mr. Gennette: They did that last week and we didn't meet last week. Tomorrow is when they were expecting we were going to give them an answer.

Mr. Rosenblum: I'm going to preface this that I'm going to go into trash. We've all done our research on what it's going to cost if we got private services. You can pay \$450-\$700/year on privatized trash, which is what we're going to do and that number is \$200. I'm only throwing it out there as food for thought. Do I propose that this is it; I'm not sure. James, after schools you said we'd be about \$520,000 because it wasn't factored into the \$590,000. That puts us about \$520,000 deficit after the \$70,000 the schools gave us. This is before talking about no HVAC and that takes another \$78,000 off and that puts us at \$442,000. Right now, we're at \$200 on the trash fee. If we went \$225 that takes another \$162,500 off and that puts us at \$279,500. If we go to \$240 that takes \$260,000 off and that puts us at \$182,000. I understand the tax. I don't subscribe to the free cash because 10-12 years ago there was a 0% increase in taxes in town for a year or 2 but they paid it down and they stayed flat and then they take a spike because you're always going to catch up. I wanted to put those numbers out there for food for thought. If we went to \$240 that puts us under the \$170,000 that Anthony is talking about. I don't feel comfortable with \$500,000 in free cash. That's a recipe for disaster. We can't go back to anybody now. If we go back we're telling them to cut positions.

Mr. Gennette: The community has been getting obliterated by assessment fees. They've been getting reassessed and they are paying through the nose and they have been paying 2 ½ for the past 6 years with no reprieve. We hit them with \$100 trash fee and now we're going to hit them with another \$100 trash fee and now you want to go up on another trash fee. You're expecting the community to pay the bill and they can't do it. I'm more in line with Anthony. If you guys don't want to do free cash and we've got to go back to the departments to do it, it sucks but I cannot go back to the taxpayers for any more than this. You're lucky you got \$200 out of me. I'm with Manny, I would have eliminated the trash altogether if we could. I'm not going back to the community for this extra money.

Mr. Rosenblum: I'm just telling you the numbers. In 3 years down the road when the contract for the teachers is up they're going to lose positions.

Mr. Gennette: We're going to lose positions no matter what if things go south. Next year when you lose positions you're going to say let's go to \$300 on the trash fee and hit the community again. They're already hitting 2 ½ and the trash fee is simply a vehicle by which to go around proposition 2 ½.

Mr. Silva: The average trash and tax bill is almost \$600 increase if we go to the \$250. Remember, built into their taxes is trash.

Mr. Rosenblum: It's built into it if they don't use trash.

Mr. Gennette: If you were giving them the break on their taxes and putting it into their trash it would be one thing, but you're going 2 ½ on the tax rate and hitting them the extra. They're not saving money on the tax bill.

Mr. Rosenblum: Let's see what the departments say.

Mr. Gennette: We're the manager of these departments. We're elected to do strategic policy and plans to the staff and the staff get their budgets and they're supposed to figure out how to manage that budget. That's the best we can do. We're in a tight spot. I'm done putting it on the back of the taxpayers.

Mr. Silva: On the back of some taxpayers. If you don't use trash you're ok, but if you use trash you're paying for the general budget.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to table fiscal year 26 budget recommendation. Mr. Gennette second.

Mr. Gennette: I think there's some items we can clear up that we need to decide on like the HVAC unit. Do you want to take that off the table this year? Finance needs to be able to figure out what these numbers are. If we leave this table and don't give them anything to go on then they're in the same spot we started with tonight.

Mr. Roseblum: The 3.8 million, is that a quote from a vendor?

Mr. Gennette: I believe that's the latest contract cost. It went out to RFP years ago. We just had construction increases over the years.

Mr. Rosenblum: If we table this we have to go back for reappropriation of funds to be able to ask for more money, if we say no to this it's going to be 4.5-5 million, which then means we say we're not doing it. It started at \$575,000 and now we're at 3.8.

Mr. Gennette: Do you know how many HVAC units we've done at the school over the last few years? Why has public safety not been able to do 1 and why did it go from whatever it was to 3.8 million? I want to review the contract because I don't want to pay 3.8 million for an HVAC unit. I think it's a ridiculous price.

Mr. Rosenblum: We also have to go back to Town Meeting for this for appropriation so if there's any change we could be waiting 6 months.

Mr. Gennette: That's what we do. We're governed by Town Meeting. It sucks but we don't have the money right now. I think the project needs to be reviewed and it shaves off some of the revenue that we would be compromising to get under 2 ½.

Mr. Alves: This HVAC potential pulling has been discussed with the Chiefs?

Mr. Gennette: The only thing I had asked the Town Administrator is if it was detrimental to anybody's health or if it was a safety concern and I was told it was not.

Mr. Silva: We have an HVAC there. We might have to spend some money to delay a new one. We might be able to repair it.

Mr. Alves: I'm not arguing that I just think a discussion should be had with them before we make a decision and they find out about it.

Mr. Rosenblum: I would table that aspect of it and let them know.

Mr. Silva: That's what we're doing. We don't have the final numbers. In the next few days, we can communicate with them. Let's table this and deal with it in the next couple weeks. We're going to have to have final numbers for Town Meeting.

Mr. Rosenblum: We can't go another meeting and make a decision without going back to the departments for the 3rd time.

Mr. Silva: I think we need to get what Finance Committee came up with. The next meeting is May 6th.

Ms. Ribeiro: You could do one the 29th.

Mr. Gennette: I wanted to walk away with some answers tonight. We have no answers.

Motion passed 3-1.

Board to discuss and possibly vote on FY26 Reclassification Requests (tabled).

Mr. Rosenblum: If we're asking all these departments to cut money I say no. The number is \$57,000. The schools just gave us \$70,000 and we're just going to add \$57,000 so we deducted \$13,000.

Mr. Alves: I agree but there's about \$17,000 that's contractual.

Ms. Ribeiro: These are above and beyond the contract. This is bumping somebody up to a next classification.

Mr. Alves: Marc said last meeting that the Board of Selectmen and Police were contractual.

Mr. Silva: Why don't we approve only contractual?

Mr. Gennette: If it's contractual why do we have to agree to that?

Ms. Ribeiro: It was a separate agreement. It's the Board of Selectmen admin going into a non-union, confidential position and the 2 admins at the PD getting reclassified.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to vote no on the reclassification requests except for the Board of Selectmen admin and 2 police admins. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Alves: That is \$39,000 off the deficit because that was included.

Mr. Silva: I think the Finance Committee is going to come in with some departments and we'll be down a little bit more.

Board to discuss and close the Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting warrants.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to close the Annual Town Meeting and Special Town Meeting warrants. **Mr. Alves second.**

Mr. Alves: Is that HVAC system not an article on this warrant?

Ms. Ribeiro: It is.

Mr. Gennette: We can open and close it. It would be redacted at the Town Meeting floor.

All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

NEW BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign Executive Session Minutes from Meeting of April 1, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign Executive Session Minutes from Meeting of April 1, 2025, with all members present except Antonio Goncalves. **Mr. Gennette second. Motion passed 3-0.1.**

Board to approve and sign Minutes from Meeting of March 18, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign Minutes from Meeting of March 18, 2025, with all members present. **Mr. Gennette second. Motion passed 3-0-1.**

Board to approve and sign Minutes from Meeting of April 1, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign Minutes from Meeting of April 1, 2025, with all members present except Antonio Goncalves. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve Annual Appointments.

Mr. Silva: With these people getting on these committees, I think a little recognition is good and some people might want to know who they can get in touch with and who is on them.

Mr. Rosenblum: Annual appointments and official from 2025-2026, ADA Coordinator annual BJ Church; Affirmative Action Officer annual Carrie Ribeiro; Agent of Record annual Anjo Pereira, Agricultural Commission 3 years Ann Chenier, John Chenier, William Bud Ellison, Michael Hogan, Betty Kibbe, Beverly Landers, Donald Roberts; Airport Master Planning Consulting Committee annual Joseph Queiroga; Board of Appeals 5 year Alan Aubin, Elaine Hodgman, Manuel Lopes, Michael Parker, Vladamir Rodrigues, Joseph Wlodyka; Board of Registrars 3 years Paul T. Babin, Jr, Kim Batista, Dana Cormier, Maria McSwain; Building Commissioner annual Paul Adzima local building inspector on call; Cable Commission Michael Assaf, James Gennette, Michael Hill non-voting member, Marc Strange; Capital Improvement Planning Committee Joshua Carpenter, James Gennette, Antonio Sanches, Ronald Saloio, Marc Strange ex officio, Luis Vitorino; Celebrate Ludlow Committee Maureen Beauregard, Linda Collette, Derek DeBarge, Elaine Hodgman, Kara Jorge, Lisa Martin, Eric Segundo, Chris Smith, Laurie Smith, Melanie

Trexler, Diane Walton; Commission on Disability 3 years Tamara Huntley, Tara Bronner, Christopher Harkins, Harry Mills, Joanne Odat-Staeb, Diane Shea Walton, Jennifer Wright, Beverly Dudley; Conservation Commission 3 year Helder Cerqueira, Penny Lebel, Angela Tierney, Joseph Chaloux; Constables Det. Lt. David Kornacki, Det. Sgt. Stephen Ricardi; Constable for Tax Collector Reid Jeffrey, Jr, Christine Jeffrey; Council on Aging Fernando Barroso, John DaCruz, Rosalind Forti, Helen Grabowski, Debora Johnson, Karen Martin, Robert Mishol, Diane Peacey, Robert Radowski, Kara Ribeiro, Deborah Potter; Custodian of Insurance Records vacant; Custodian of Tax Possession vacant; Director of Emergency Management Chief Ryan Pease; Dog Park Committee Melissa Dion, James Goodreau, Darlene Kennedy, Jesse Mendez, Sara Mendez, Steven Nicoll, Kara Ribeiro, Marc Strange; Economic Development Officer William Rosenblum; Energy Coordinator James Gennette; Equal Opportunity Employment Officer Carrie Ribeiro; Fair Housing Committee Joshua Carpenter, Marc Strange ex officio; First Meeting House Committee Thomas Haluch, Jeremy Kavka, Betty Kibbe, Marilyn Paul-Lewis and one vacancy; Graves Registration Officer Eric Segundo, Steven Sawyer assistant; Hazardous Material Coordinator Captain Seth Falconer; Historian Marilyn Paul-Lewis; Historical Commission Allison DeLong, James Chip Harrington, Betty Kibbe, John Moll, Karen Pilon, Angela Tierney; Historic Study Committee Sandra Stanek; Industrial Finance Authority John DeBarge; Insurance Advisory Committee Michelle Anecchiarico, Lt, Michael Brennan, Mickey Buhl, Olivia Eberli, Zachary Ellison, Peter Gallagher, Ashlee Goncalves-Korny, Kathleen Houle, Richard Kolodziej, Angela Kramer, Michael Lacharite, Deputy Chief Jeffrey Lavoie, Sharon Martins, Carrie Ribeiro, Det. Sgt. Stephen Ricardi, Carlos Sanches, Marc Strange ex officio; Internal Safety Committee BJ Church, Dave Ritchie, Olivia Eberli, Sgt. Brian Shameklis, Michael Bertini, Deputy Chief Jeffrey Lavoie, Heather Jolicoeur, Jamie Tomas, Kathy Demetrius; License Agent for the Board of Selectmen Det. Lt. David Kornacki, Det. Sgt. Stephen Ricardi, Det. Jordan Liszka; Local Emergency Planning Committee Ken Batista, Lt. Michael Brennan, Kathy Demetrius, Derek DeBarge, Louis Gilli, Helen Grabowski, Michael Hill, Kristen Jerome, Scott Kozak, Paulina Matusik, Bob McCormick, Chief Ryan Pease, Dave Ritchie, Marc Strange, Chief Daniel Valadas; Ludlow Cultural Council Grade Barone, Margaret Bernard, Nira Flatley, Michelle Goncalves, Lawrence Goodreau, Lorraine Goodreau, Pamela Hayes, Sharon Litourneau-Clark, Deborah Potter, Robert Radowski, Robert Roccanti, Janet Settembro; MMWEC Board of Directors James Gennette; Mobile Home Rent Control Board Mary Evangelista, Joseph Young, vacancy, vacancy; Municipal Hearing Officer vacancy; Open Space Planning Committee John Archambeau, William Bud Ellison, James Goodreau, Elaine Hodgman, Ryan Linton, William Rosenblum, Joel Silva, Angela Tierney, Jamie Tomas; Parking Hearing Officer Anthony Alves; Permitting Authority Trench Regulations Ken Batista, Jim Goodreau, Jamie Tomas; Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Ray Phoenix, Joel Silva; Pioneer Valley Transit Authority Anthony Alves; Pond Management Committee Judy Breault, Elaine Hodgman, Patricia Kwasiborski, Julie Markiewicz, Janis Santos, William Simons, Anna Vital, Tony Vital; Safety Committee BJ Church, Christopher Coelho, Captain Zac Ellison, Peter Gallagher, Melissa Graf, Deputy Chief Jeffrey Lavoie, Sharon Martins, Sgt. Brian Shameklis, Jamie Tomas; Sealer of Weights & Measures Patrick Halpin; Sworn Weigher Joanne Martins; Town Counsel Brian Winner Mead, Talerman & Costa, LLC; Town Labor Counsel Stanley L. Weinberg Attorney at Law; Westover Municipal Development Corp (WMDC) Maureen Kim Downing; Westover Golf Commission John Archambeau, Sean McBride, Mario Morton, Andrew Panek, vacant and James Tyburski.

Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.

Board to discuss and possibly approve new Commission on Disabilities bylaws.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to approve the new Commission on Disabilities bylaws to go to Town Meeting. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to discuss status of Treasurer/Collector position.

Ms. Ribeiro: That is a vacant position. We had a plan and agreement and appointed an internal candidate on a temporary basis. Since then that plan has taken a different route and that individual has decided to step down from that. We're at the point where we're going to need to post that position. We have in the budget about \$110-\$115,000 for that position. We're going to have to be pretty competitive. It's a position that other towns and municipalities are having trouble filling. We could offer some type of hybrid opportunity. Initially that's tough in a position like that. It's a position where you need to be in the office. We're looking to post but not until we spoke to you about it. There won't be much change if any to the description of the job.

Mr. Silva: Right now, we have a service helping out.

Ms. Ribeiro: We do. Mass Munifin is there on a regular basis helping. We probably will not be able to afford them much past the end of the fiscal year. We have some funds from this position being vacant and another new position we've been holding off on but we're going to run out quickly.

Mr. Silva: What are the salaries we're posting?

Ms. Ribeiro: We budgeted \$110-\$115,000.

Mr. Silva: Should we post it \$110-\$135,000 and see what we get. We might get somebody slightly over.

Ms. Ribeiro: In the past we've posted up to a certain point so if you'd like to post up to a certain point we can. We don't have \$130,000 in that budget right now..

Mr. Gennette: I like that, especially if we know that 3rd party service is going to be coming off.

Ms. Ribeiro: It's going to be close. We can get it posted very soon. These positions take 6-8 weeks. That's assuming we can find a qualified individual.

Mr. Gennette: When do we have the 3rd party till?

Ms. Ribeiro: We have a month-to-month contract with them as long as we can afford them. We've pulled back on some things. We got through W2 season, 1099's closing the year and those major milestones they've been working on. They are working on systems and processes and getting everything up to best practice. It would be ideal to have Mass Munifin work with this individual but they're working on standard operating procedures.

Mr. Gennette: You need approval to post the Treasurer/Collector position or we're just discussing it?

Ms. Ribeiro: It's just for discussion.

Mr. Silva: We might need approval to go up a little bit more.

Ms. Ribeiro: We would need approval with a contract negotiation.

Mr. Silva: It will entice more candidates.

Ms. Ribeiro: We have \$110-\$115,000 in the budget.

Mr. Silva: What are others posting them at?

Ms. Ribeiro: They're right around \$100-\$120,000. It depends on the size of the community.

Chairman to sign Community Development Block Grant Application (previously approved).

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to request the Chairman to sign the Community Development Block Grant Application. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

BOARD UPDATES/MISC

Chairman to approve and sign all bills, warrants and abatements. A record of all warrants is in the Selectmen's office for perusal until provided to the Town Accountant's office.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Rosenblum: We have town clean up day on May 3rd. DPW will be doing some mulch delivery and trash bag pick up. We also have the trial court and crews helping out. Boys & Girls Scout

troops. If there are other town employees or departments that would like to get involved that's May 3rd.

Ms. Ribeiro: We're promoting it through the webpage and Get Lost in Ludlow. We're missing someone at this meeting. We're all going to dearly miss him, Tony Goncalves. When I first ran and was elected he took me under his wing and he became the big brother that I never had and we're going to miss him. We're all there for his family.

Mr. Alves: The weather is getting warmer and there are more people out walking with their children. Be careful on the roads. Pay attention, try to obey the speed limits. Don't be part of a disaster. The Michael J. Dias Foundation was honored last week by Business West as a difference maker so congratulations to them. My daughter turns one next week so if you're watching Daddy loves you and it's past your bedtime. Finally, this room is really heavy this evening. Tony had an impact on all of us in a variety of ways. Thanks to the police, fire and DPW that made a presence at his services. That was nice. It was good to see that Ludlow loved Tony as much as Tony loved Ludlow.

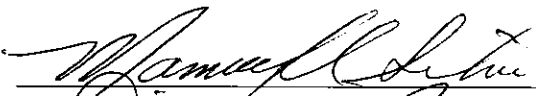
Mr. Gennette: I was visiting with the DPW not too long ago and trying to gauge where they were as far as positions and work getting done. You're probably seeing some of the roads left over from winter that are a little ragged. The DPW has plans. All their spring stuff is in motion and I'm confident in their ability to be able to get everything done with what they have. Like Bill, I didn't know Tony growing up. He became known to me as I was running for Selectmen. It was a pleasure to know Tony. He was an incredibly intelligent man and funny. When he was on his game he was a funny man. I'm happy to have known him for the amount of time that I did. Ludlow lost a community leader. Thank you for recognizing him.

Mr. Silva: I'm going to ditto what everyone said. I would like to speak about it but I can't. I have something else and it has to do with billing. Carrie, if you could make a note for the next agenda. The billing we have going out they just bunch up. I've gotten a lot of calls. Sewer bills went out and up. It seems people are getting inundated at a certain time. The bills are not quite right. There's names on the bills from people that sold. Billing should be based on January 1st. I would like to streamline it. I know we've been having issues getting the bills out properly. It would be nice to stagger them properly. Some people got 2 years of bills. Now we're going to have a trash bill.

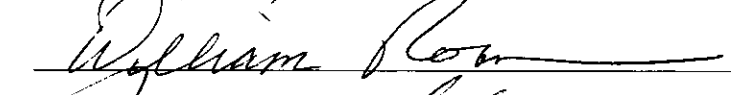
Ms. Ribeiro: We have a meeting tomorrow morning to discuss the sewer bill, the timing of how it went out and the inaccuracies.

Mr. Silva: Remind people we moved the date to May 30th for them to pay. Mr. Rosenblum announced the committees. If anyone has some knowledge or would like to serve on these committees, we're always looking for people. There's several vacancies that we desperately need. Some are required to have quorum to meet.

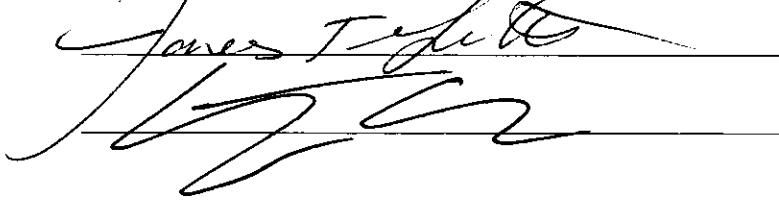
Motion made by Mr. Gennette to adjourn at 7:32 p.m. Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.



Chairperson



James T. Gennette



William P. Silva