



**Town of Ludlow
Office of the Select Board**

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

The Meeting of the Select Board held on Tuesday, January 6, 2026, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Select Board's Conference Room.

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

First order of business: Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Silva: Pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, section 20(f), after notifying the Select Board chair, any person may record the open session of this Select Board meeting, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair. This meeting is being recorded by Ludlow Community Television. If anyone else is recording, please identify yourself now. There is no one.

5:30-5:45 P.M. – PUBLIC COMMENT

VISITATION

5:45 P.M. – Michelle Hill -Treasurer/Collector Interview

Mr. Silva: Michelle, you are here for just an interview so that the Select Board can meet and greet, and what not. So, if you could just give us a briefing about yourself and why it is you want to come work in Ludlow.

Ms. Hill: Okay, fair enough. I've been working in local government for over 20 years now. I spent a good part of that 17 and a half in Southwick. Then I did another six months as a consultant while I was working in Southbridge. So, I've been in Southbridge for the last two years. Unfortunately, I've had a life changing event that has me kind of rethinking things and I'm hoping to hopefully to land back in the western Mass part of things or exploring other options as well. So, Ludlow definitely attracts, it's in the western area and there's a lot of good to it. And I also like the Board of Selectmen aspect of things opposed to Council. So, there is a lot to be said about the governing and how that happens.

Mr. Silva: Yeah, and I remember I was in Southbridge for a little while helping out in that. We didn't have much interaction, but we had some. Everything went well. Questions with anyone?

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you for your interest and thank you for choosing our little town of Ludlow. MUNIS. How well versed are you with MUNIS? Cause I see here that you did MUNIS set up in the New Year budget module.

Ms. Hill: Yes. That's the most recent new module that I've been working with. So, I've actually started off in the DOS space of MUNIS all the way to the winter base now. I've integrated a lot of things from tax title that used to be offline into the module in there. I've been into the trash module. I've been into all of the modules to a degree but I'm pretty vast in it.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, you would say that you have a very good understanding of MUNIS?

Ms. Hill: I would say I'm at least intermediate or above.

Mr. Gennette: I'm James. Thank you for applying and coming in and being a part of what's going on. Love seeing you in here. I just have one question. Is there any information or

situations we should be aware of before we enter into an employment agreement with you? Something that's not in your resume. You can say no.

Ms. Hill: I'm gonna say no. I don't know if that was a trick question.

Mr. Gennette: It's not a trick question.

Ms. Hill: I think I have everything in there. I was prior military. I've been in government for many years. And all my interactions with regards to, I was a Selectwoman myself for many years. So, I think I've pretty much covered everything. I can't think what I

Mr. Gennette: I was thinking more like detrimental. Something that maybe we don't know about that would surface later, that kind of a thing. But again, you can say no.

Ms. Hill: I haven't committed any crimes or anything like that.

Mr. Gennette: Thank you. That's the first time I asked that question. I'm floating it by ya.

Mr. Silva: Anthony, you have anything you'd like to ask.

Mr. Alves: Good evening. Thank you. So, in the towns that you've worked in looks like Southwick and Southbridge. Can you just go over how those departments were structured, like number of people?

Ms. Hill: Absolutely. So, in Southwick you had a very unique situation. We actually landed down where I started 103 used to be Treasurer, Collector, and Town Clerk. I was the last of the Mohegans on that cause as years went on, the other two communities disbanded. Once I finished my master's, I told them that I was also considering looking and I was and they knew that. So, we worked together on working on getting it disbanded as well. So, in three, so it's actually Treasurer, Collector and Town Clerk now. So, they're separated. So, as far as the amount of employees when I was there, I had one assistant and three other positions. So, it's a total of four that reported to me and we're all in one area. Where I am now, I have a Collector's office and a Treasurer's office. I'm also the finance director as well so I have others that report to me. So, I'll just stick with the Treasurer/Collector piece of it. So, I have three assistants in total and a total of seven people that are underneath me just in the Treasurer/Collector piece.

Mr. Alves: Okay. And through your experience, which is pretty extensive you've seen both sides, right? Where the Treasurer Collectors combined into one and where they've been separate. What do you feel works better?

Ms. Hill: Well, I've never actually done it separately. So, I've always had a combination. I've always had three hats. So, I think it works well only because I'm accustomed doing it that way. I think it's feasible for any city or town to combine them because it is kind of something that can work. It works for a lot of other cities and towns, and I don't see why it couldn't work for here.

Mr. Alves: And can you talk to me about the importance of the Treasurer Collector position in dealings with the public and how you manage the foot traffic that comes in and maybe higher-pressure situations, someone's unhappy?

Ms. Hill: I've never dealt with that. So, yes, I get a lot of that. I won't get into a specific because I've been yelled at, actually I've been attacked physically, I've had to bring the cops in for it. So, I've had all that. I have different levels of interacting with the residents. A lot of them need assistance. They may not be able to pay their tax bills in full when the due dates and stuff like that. So, I always like to interact with them on that. But I also got the aspect of well you haven't paid your bill for a long time. There's been no interaction. I need to put it in tax title. So, I had to go through that process, and I get some that understand and we'll work through it and then I get some that are not and they have a lot of different situations to that. So, I have interacted with a lot of different scenarios.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to kind of piggyback on that is that it's very crucial in that department in particular, especially when you're dealing with people with large sums of money. Is that empathetic because that had been an issue once in the past. So, it's something that we're looking for, I think is just more cohesiveness with the community type of thing.

Ms. Hill: So, I will at least tell you I'm a very aggressive collector. Okay. But I also set the boundaries of what the process is gonna be and when the public understands what that is gonna be, then they kind of come within that but we also worked together doing that. So, just in Southbridge I walked into Southbridge, they hadn't done our tax titles for five years and we had a new law. We had a law change that was in the works. So, I had to work on five years' worth. I went from 188 to 300 and something tax titles. Okay. I'm down to under 200 right now and that's in one year's time. And that's with me working with them not working against them.

Mr. Silva: So, I'm sure you've researched the ongoings that's been happening in that office, in our office. We've gone through a couple different changes over there. A couple different, and you're coming into I don't wanna say the same that you're leaving or what you had before because there's quite a few issues that need to be ironed out and I'm sure you can handle em. But as long as you know that you are ready for the challenge.

Ms. Hill: I am ready for the challenge. And as far as doing my research yes, it's pretty well understood. I've been informed by, yes.

Mr. Silva: Yeah, it's quite a chore to walk into that department right now and hopefully you'll straighten it.

Ms. Hill: I had probably a harder challenge walking into Southbridge, so, yes.

Mr. Silva: That was in a flux so even when I went over there, I mean they went through what, three, four managers before I got in there and they we're behind in a lot. A lot of issues. A lot of stuff. So, I can see what you went through. Well, if that's it, I think we're good. Anybody else? Anything else? We thank you for stepping up and hopefully you can.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to appoint with the ability to negotiate for the Treasurer/Collector position for Michelle Hill. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

6:00 P.M. – Sheila Rubin – Senior Center Provider Outreach Coordinator Interview

Mr. Silva: This meeting's the meet and greet. So, just tell us a little something about yourself and why it is you want to work in Ludlow.

Ms. Rubin: So, I applied for this position cause I genuinely enjoy working with the older population and supporting them and helping them navigate this complex system. I'm looking forward to it.

Mr. Silva: Anybody got a question?

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, thank you Sheila for taking the position or applying for the position for the Senior Center Outreach interview. I do have a question. but it's pretty critical. It's kind of heavy hitter. I'm floating it out here tonight. I'm trying it out on you. Are there any situations or information this Board should be aware of that could be detrimental to your future employment with us?

Ms. Rubin: No.

Mr. Gennette: No. Perfect. Thank you so much.

Mr. Rosenblum: I don't have anything at all. I just hope that you embrace the town, and I just wish you the best. We have a fairly large population, senior population in the Senior Center

January 6, 2026

itself. It is extremely vibrant. It's busy. And any help that Jody can have is welcome. Thank you.

Mr. Alves: I have a question for Marc. So, I know we changed some things a little while back. Obviously, this position's outside of Town Hall. So, how did we get to this point I guess? Were there interviews at the Senior Center?

Mr. Strange: Yes. So, I think Lisa and Jody had interviews. Interviewed Sheila and others. And Sheila was the candidate that they recommended to you guys.

Mr. Alves: Yeah. I figured that was the case. I just wanted to make that clear that differentiating from what we just did right before. Right. Someone within kind of our purview. Your last role Sheila, the Transitional Assistant Supervisor, how do you see that relating to this role?

Ms. Rubin: I actually became very familiar with state and federal resources. So, I wanna bring that into more my community versus traveling to central or even eastern Mass. I wanted to be more in my community.

Mr. Silva: Sheila, mines almost similar to Anthony's while reading through your resume here you were in the medical field quite a bit. This is not quite the same. You're moving on to.

Ms. Rubin: Yes and no cause I worked with a lot of older patients, and I had to become familiar with VNA services and even I can bring that into to the Senior Center as well because the goal would be to keep seniors home versus heading into a facility. Keep them socialized in a sense.

Mr. Silva: Okay. Thank you and welcome and hopefully things go well for both of us. Well, actually the Senior Center and you.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to appoint Sheila Rubin as the Senior Center Provider Outreach Coordinator. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE

26-001 Chief Pease – Request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for a Firefighter/Paramedic for an injury sustained while on duty on December 8, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to approve the request from Chief Pease to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for a Firefighter/Paramedic for an injury sustained while on duty on December 8, 2025. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

26-002 Chief Brennan – Request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for a Police Officer for an injury sustained while on duty on December 22, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to approve the request from Chief Brennan to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for a Police Officer for an injury sustained while on duty on December 22, 2025. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

26-0003 Letter of Resignation from Peggy Bernard from Ludlow Cultural Council effective 1/2/2026. Board to post vacancy.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to accept the Letter of Resignation from Peggy Bernard from Ludlow Cultural Council effective 1/2/2026 and that we post the vacancy. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

January 6, 2026

Board to consider employee reclassification and new position requests for FY27 (tabled from December 16, 2025).

Ms. Ribeiro: Today I spoke to Chief Brennan and originally on the new positions request was the Firefighter/Paramedic from the Fire Department. Those two positions, the Recreation Director, and the Dispatch Supervisor through dispatch. Him and Chief Pease are looking for that Dispatch Supervisor as a reclass. So, it's not a new position. So, it's a big difference in.

Mr. Rosenblum: That makes a difference.

Ms. Ribeiro: Yes. So, as you can see on the document in front of you, I've updated the figures and the numbers. So, now the Dispatch Supervisor is basically a reclass with a minimal increase. It's an hourly rate. He basically took the, we would have to make a new scale within the dispatch contract so I don't know, we'd probably have to open that up with the union, but he basically based it off a 25% increase of the step that the individual is at now. So, that was the only change that I wanted to point out to you on the requests coming in from the departments.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, we're just talking reclass, right? For the purpose of this agenda item.

Ms. Ribeiro: I think it's both.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, wasn't there, the one with fire, is that gonna be funded the way that Chief Pease had mentioned he would fund it? He was funding it through revenue?

Mr. Strange: Yeah. We'd have to put in a warrant article for Town Meeting to approve it. But we do a special revenue fund and then the ambulance fees or funding fees would fund the two positions or the one position.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, instead of going to general fund free, in the general fund, it goes into that?

Mr. Strange: Yeah.

Mr. Gennette: Marc, what's your thoughts on this?

Mr. Strange: On the reclassifications?

Mr. Gennette: Yeah. We're talking 340,000.

Mr. Silva: Well, we know that can't happen this year.

Mr. Strange: Well, the fire would not come out of the operating budget. I think the reclassifications are short money. What was it? There's three?

Ms. Ribeiro: They're 59,427. The reclassifications are under \$60,000.

Mr. Rosenblum: Can I jump in on this? So, Mr. Chairman, I had this discussion, I can't remember who I had it with, but I think that this makes sense for the reclassifications because there's so many times that we sit here and we do union negotiations and everyone else is getting their pie and this is shorter money and I think it sometimes the reclassifications fall into people that are more in the middle of the road positions. Admins or anything like that or it's shorter money but it's also rewarding them in a period of time that's kind of tight. I don't have a problem with the 59,000 on the reclassifications just because I think that unions seem to get what they want. Every now and then it'd be nice to take care of probably people that could use it more too. That's just my thought. And as far as the new positions, if we're gonna fund the police or the fire through revenue and it's gonna go through pretty much a revolving fund, as long as it doesn't touch budgeting process.

Mr. Silva: The only thing it is gonna add in the insurance fringe benefits, won't it?

Mr. Rosenblum: No, I think that's included in it.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. Ryan said that we could fund it through. I'm not sure how that works as a practical matter, but they do have enough money. I mean they usually clear \$900,000 or so every year. A million bucks.

Mr. Silva: Just wondering how that would return to pay off some of the insurance, the cost, you know?

Mr. Rosenblum: It's a mini enterprise fund almost.

Mr. Silva: And if that were to happen, how about the sentiment within the community in town saying, well we don't have money why are we getting a new hire?

Mr. Strange: We have to explain it.

Mr. Silva: It is a new hire. And is that gonna be yearly forever?

Mr. Rosenblum: No, I think this one in particular is that the chief's looking to fill, he's got one nine-man crew and two eights. So, these two positions put him at three nines which is basically where I think three, four years ago, that's what he came to us is he goes if he has three, nine person crews honestly I think that he'd be set for quite some time to be honest. I mean obviously over time if we expanded and we had another truck, maybe we go to tens but I think this is something he's had on the Board almost as long as I've been here six and a half years is he's been shooting for the three nines. This gives him the three nines and he's seeing the revenue that can pay for it. I can see the perception though, cause I do wanna make it known is that I can see the perception is it's still coming basically out of the general fund out of free cash. Is that going well we are paying for it. You know what I mean? But then again I know that we're pretty solid in our free cash to where this amount doesn't really touch it. You know, if six, seven, whatever the number is now but I mean I don't have a problem with that if we find a way to do it. And that's kind of the same thing is that now dispatch supervisor, we looked at a position, and we'd be adding a position when we have several sergeants that are usually on duty that could supervise that department. It's a reclass and its minimal money. I think that's good economic sense from the provisional chief to do it that way.

Mr. Silva: Anybody else want something because I got a couple questions.

Mr. Gennette: Yes, I do. So, the youth services assistant part-time, am I reading this correctly that the jump in that it looks to me like more than a hundred percent. Is that right?

Mr. Alves: It's going full time.

Ms. Ribeiro: Yeah, it is. So, recently the children's librarian left, she resigned. So, we are going to be filling that position. We're working on that right now. This individual that's currently in the youth services assistant role has been working part-time. She's been working 18 hours a week because they haven't had money in the budget. The trustees and the director have been in front of you I think the last two years asking for an increase in hours to this position. At this time right now, this individual is basically filling in and working full-time and probably will continue to once we hire a children's librarian because there is one other part-time assistant and there is a couple pages but they're very short staffed up in the children's department and they're very busy. This particular individual that is working more hours right now has done a lot of the programming for the children's department. She got a lot of new ideas in and she's actually currently going to school to become, she's working towards the MLS. She's got a little ways to go but she is in school and that's her goal. So Melissa and I actually are going to be meeting this week to discuss more but I would highly, highly recommend that this position be considered as a full-time position.

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, through you to Mr. Gennette, I apologize I didn't have this in front of me before. But to answer your question all these look reasonable and viable to me. The cable TV manager, that wouldn't come out of our budget. They have their own enterprise

fund. The only one, the last item is, I don't think it's ripe yet because we actually don't have and L five position yet. We're still in negotiations. So, I would suggest we back that one out and then maybe for next year look at it. But we also know that the special police rates are relatively low compared to other towns. So, as I'm looking at this, notwithstanding, understanding the sort of the dichotomy or the contradiction of us being in such a budget crunch and also awarding reclassifications. We totally get that but, we don't wanna be pennywise and pound foolish. I don't think these, if the Board authorizes these reclassifications that's not really gonna make a difference in how we put together the budget for Fiscal 27.

Mr. Gennette: We are moving to a benefited position from a non-benefited position and we know that much to what Manny said earlier with insurances and stuff like that we're putting more weight in that area. We're trying to unload from that area. So, that's the reason that I asked you because you have to be able to manage that back and forth.

Ms. Ribeiro: The good thing about that in this particular year in this particular department is that with the children's librarian we anticipate that. I mean the children's librarian was here for a long time. She was here for 25 plus years. So, her salary was high. So, we anticipate that the budget will drop and the library budget for that line item for that salary will drop. So, that may help this year with those benefits if you were to approve that.

Mr. Gennette: So, I'm actually fine with these. My biggest concern is budget season. As far as I was concerned I'm ready to go into a hiring freeze, just so you know, and I'm also ready to stop all training, you know what I mean? We're talking about going over two and a half. Everything needs to stop if that's the case, if that's the general conversation that we're having right now, everything freezes. So, once this comes up, this is on a target list for me, you know. Do I think they need it? Absolutely they need it. Again, like Manny had said, we keep doing union contracts and people keep getting raises and the people that are non-union are getting lost. So, I get it.

Ms. Ribeiro: These aren't all non-union positions, just so you know, I just wanna bring that to your attention. I mean the one that Marc talked about in planning back out the department is actually asking for a reclass to something that technically doesn't exist right now. We're in negotiation. So, I agree with him backing that one out right now and revisiting that next year.

Mr. Gennette: Which one is it?

Ms. Ribeiro: That's for planning.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, Mr. Chairman, theoretically the new position requests Recreation Director if we were to say that we didn't do any of those, but we did do fire and it's through its own revolving fund. We didn't do recreation director. Then what happens is that eliminates \$288,000 from this and it really just comes down to it being reclassifications at 60,000. You're cutting out the top and it gets a \$60,000 reclassification. There's some union in here or whatever but at least it's shorter money for those people. But then again, the Recreation Director that's separate from Whitney, that's separate.

Mr. Silva: Retirement. That was my next question is we had a retirement. Is this gonna take care of that retirement or they're still gonna hire that position?

Ms. Ribeiro: That's a new position.

Mr. Silva: This is an added new position. Which is a great thing by the way. I think it's great that we move forward with this recreation cause we've been so lax on recreation. It's been terrible. Parks are terrible. Everything is terrible. However, can we pay for it? That's my concern. And I gotta say, and I'll still stress it again, we are going to be in trouble because I'm not an override person and I don't think it's gonna fly. So we're gonna have to be ready to do cuts. So, now if we're gonna do cuts what happens to this fire position now that let's say we have to cut a firefighter or whatever.

Mr. Gennette: We have to cut their budget. What do they do? That's the point. I mean, they can sit there and say it's coming out of the ambulance subscription fund all they want. But if we turn around and say you're losing 150,000 off your operating budget, you know what I mean? What's the trade off for them?

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, depending on how we wrote the language of the revolving fund they could supplement their budget, their operating budget with the ambulance special revenue fund.

Mr. Gennette: They're doing that already though. Every time the fire department, I hear if the fire department always leans on the ambulance subscription fund.

Mr. Strange: Different funds. Ambulance subscription is when the residents pay for if they're not on insurance. Right now, all the ambulance, like the Medicaid reimbursements, whatever they are, they come directly to us. They go into an account and then they close out the free cash. So, they want to capture some of that money before it gets to free cash and use it to hire a couple of new firefighters.

Mr. Rosenblum: I know the finance guy down in the end cause I was gonna say also is that Anthony and I have been very big on recreation. Everybody is and trying to get back to where we were with Park and Rec and everything but then I was going to segue and say I'm sure he's got some points he'd like to make.

Mr. Gennette: And parks are as far as projects go or free cash, they're not operational budget. They're a project. So, I mean that's a completely different thing than when you're talking about a Recreational Director. And the other thing, I'm all for doing all of that in the timeframe it's supposed to be done. If we can't afford that for a couple of years we gotta figure that out.

Mr. Rosenblum: Well, if we do projects we need someone to oversee the fact that they don't get dilapidated too.

Mr. Gennette: Well, we still have the DPW and Recreation. They should be overseeing those projects. Whether or not they're effective at doing that, I don't know. But I don't know, we start talking about two and a half it changes the dynamics completely. And I think you're right. I think that if we go to Town Meeting and we say we're going over two and a half and it's gonna be four or five, 6% I think your Town Meeting's gonna shoot it down and then we're in the middle of chopping heads at that point.

Mr. Silva: Well, the thing is Town Meeting might shoot it down to go, but then the public. You gotta go to a ballot.

Mr. Rosenblum: Well no that's the thing is Town Meetings gotta approve it to go to the ballot. Which means, I'm telling you right now Town Meeting is gonna say no. It'll never make it to the ballot.

Mr. Gennette: So, we're talking about money here and we're just backing it into the override. So, it's not a lot but if you do it a lot, a lot of times, you know what I mean? Or I don't know.

Mr. Silva: Again, like I said before a little turns into a lot.

Mr. Alves: To that point, that was one of the comments I was gonna make. We can look at this and you can say it's small money but when you have no money it's a lot of money. Okay. I think it's too early to be considering this. I think even if you look at just the classifications justified or not when you look at \$60,000 and you look at how we're \$1.7 million under budget, that \$60,000 of these is gonna be someone else's job. That's reality of being 1.7 in a deficit. Without calling any of these out individually, you look at some 10% raises, 16% raises. Again, deserved or not I can't justify that when we're \$1.7 million over budget. And I know we talked about unions, I know we talked about that stuff, when people are getting 2%, 3%, whatever they're getting and we have asked for 10, 15% in roles. So, for me again, I'm only me, it's too early in the process for me to consider this.

Mr. Silva: Yeah. If we have time, certainly we can ...

Mr. Gennette: I don't wanna downplay the importance of these positions and how much I would love to be able to do this for people, but I think Anthony's on point and I'm right there with him and I wanna do it but I can't justify it.

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, do you guys want to table it? Do you want to table it for a future discussion? Do you want to vote?

Mr. Rosenblum: I would table it. I'm not in disagreement with zero but we also as Mr. Alves is saying I don't know how much more we're gonna cut down from 1.7 but is to see where we are, when's this have to be? It's like April.

Mr. Strange: So, we have a public forum on February 11th. I plan on presenting the two possibilities. One with the override, one with cuts and additional fees. Just so the public is aware of sort of where we are. Maybe, get a feel for how people are feeling. I think you guys need to close the warrant April. End of April. We'll find out what our actual insurance increase at the end of January. That'll be helpful. The governor hasn't provided her budget yet. We're being very conservative on our estimates for our state aid increases, things will change. I don't know how much they will change but it certainly makes sense to table this discussion until we have some more information.

Mr. Rosenblum: And with that, hopefully we pound Town Meeting members with the fact that we're having that February meeting, the open forum because they can help shape the direction that we go in prior to actually getting to Town Meeting. That's our form of government. It's Town Meeting, whether you like it or not. So, if we get enough people there that sit there and give us an opinion on something and you get 95% of em say no, or 75% say yes, or you're in the middle then you kind of know where you're going. That kind of helps us say okay, no, maybe, yes. So, anyone that's listening that's a Town Meeting member talk to your people in your precinct. Get their input as well.

Mr. Gennette: You know, I fought for that dispatch supervisor three years ago and this Board shot it down. Just so you know.

Mr. Rosenblum: We went to a Detective Lieutenant instead.

Mr. Gennette: I think we went to the overnight Sergeant.

Mr. Rosenblum: I mean, don't get me wrong, I love all our public safety, but when you look at the numbers we had before again we're getting a little top heavy with supervisors. I'm just looking at the numbers in comparison to others.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to table for a future meeting. Mr. Gennette second.

NEW BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign minutes from Select Board meeting of December 16, 2025.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign minutes from Select Board meeting of December 16, 2025, with all members present except Mr. Gennette. Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 3-0-1.

Board to accept M.G.L. Chapter 32B, Section 21 authorizing changes to employee health insurance benefits.

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, as you all know we've been negotiating sort of informally with the Insurance Advisory Committee, which will then become the PEC. But in order to formally send a notification to the PEC that the Board intends to enter into these negotiations and to effectuate health insurance plan design changes, the Board has to accept these sections of the state law.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum that the Select Board accept Mass General Law Chapter 32B, Sections 19 and 21 through 23 to begin negotiations with the PEC on health insurance plan design changes starting in Fiscal year 27. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve the extended liquor hours for Super Bowl Sunday, February 8, 2026.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman, background this one is 2:00 A.M. unlike New Year's which it was 2:00 A.M. no alcohol and then food until four. This one is everyone's out, closed by 2:00 A.M.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to extend the liquor hours for Super Bowl Sunday, February 8, 2026. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to discuss possibility of petitioning the state for more liquor licenses.

Mr. Rosenblum: I think we've discussed it a little bit in the past and I think this is actually something that has gone back as far as Bill Rooney at one point was petitioning for some also. I'm more in the school of that I would like to see on-premises full alcohol licenses increased with the possibility that the mills might attract some more either restaurants or something in of that nature. As for off-premises liquor sales in general, I honestly think that we're good with what we have in town and most of them are family-owned small businesses. I know that it's usually census based and you gotta go through the ABCC. Personally, if we had maybe two to three, I know in the past they looked at five. But I think that if we had a couple establishments that were in the mills that might cater to food that would want a full liquor license with one in the pocket. I don't know two or three.

Mr. Silva: We're at full capacity, right? The 17th?

Mr. Strange: Yeah.

Mr. Rosenblum: And I would be in favor of approaching ABCC, the state and finding a way that if we can increase that to at least, I'm not greedy but two or three.

Mr. Alves: So, we are at full capacity? We sure cause this chart says one available in each category.

Mr. Silva: No, we're talking about the on premises all alcohol.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's the one honestly for me with I think anymore of when we sit here and we see all alcohol off premises, it's like package stores, convenient stores. We're looking at nine right there. I don't know if there's anything still open there. I know that we did have a question from someone that wanted to possibly open another one which would mean that we'd have to get another one if we don't have one available. I'm just more of the school of all alcohol on premises to bring in some that would be possibly something that attract something to the mills in the way of food and beverage. It's just my thought.

Mr. Silva: Bill if I recall the state kind of changed some of the all alcohol. Didn't they give it right back to the cities and towns to decide whether or not they possibly.

Mr. Strange: It was a proposal but it's still kind of bouncing around the legislature. But it hasn't gone anywhere.

Mr. Silva: I thought I saw something.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, with that question though, sorry Mr. Chairman, didn't we do something before, couple months ago to where we could go ahead and say someone like we used for instance Barburrito, is I think that they're only beer and wine. That change though allowed them to go to full liquor if they applied for it.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, so, I have some questions and comments. In that respect we put that forward at Town Meeting it passed. Is that live or is that waiting on state approval? How does that work? Because that's not a, is that a bylaw?

Mr. Strange: I don't know that that was a bylaw. I'd have to double check. But my first thought was I think you guys just need to approve that.

Mr. Alves: Which we did.

Mr. Strange: So, now let's say, for example, Barburrito wanted to come in.

Mr. Silva: Yeah, we approved that, but we'd still need to approve the establishment.

Mr. Strange: Correct.

Mr. Alves: Right. They need to apply. So, I'd say there were what, there was four of those. I mean, have we as a town reached out to those four establishments and made them aware of the opportunity?

Mr. Strange: No.

Mr. Alves: I think that would be a good idea if we can do that. So, secondly, going back to the available, so there's one in that category, wine and malt off premise, right? According to this chart.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. This is an old chart. So, the only one that might be available is the beer and wine off premises. But I gotta double check that.

Mr. Alves: I'm sorry, on or off?

Mr. Strange: Off.

Mr. Alves: Because where I was going with that, I tend to agree with Mr. Rosenblum but if there is one on premise available then in theory there's one all alcohol on premises available if they apply for it and then come back in front of us to get it approved for the all, if someone was savvy enough to do that and there was one available. So, what governs? I'm new here. I guess I can't say that much longer. What governs at the top of the chart it says quota allowed 39. Is that the quota we've set as a town or is that the quota imposed on us by the state?

Mr. Strange: Yeah, state.

Mr. Alves: And that varies with population?

Mr. Strange: Populations part of the equation. Yep.

Mr. Alves: Which has been going down. Well, if you open a couple more alcohol restaurants.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, we're at 37.

Mr. Alves: So, what's the process if we were to apply for them, what goes into that?

Mr. Strange: I'm not sure. I haven't gotten that far yet. So, I can certainly report back at the next meeting if you guys want me to do some research.

Mr. Alves: Yeah. We're not time bond here. I don't think there's any time crunch on it. Again, I'm generally in line with Mr. Rosenblum's thinking of the on premises. I just think we need more information, one, on the process, two I guess I'd be curious if that on premises is available or not. Because then again technically we have one. And I'd also be curious about what types of options the town has, for lack of a better term, dormant licenses. Ones that are held but not being used and by not being used I would if someone's closed and renovating or working towards opening, I wouldn't count that in that category. But something

that's clearly not being used, cause I think that opens other opportunities there without needing to petition for more potentially.

Mr. Gennette: Is there a legality to that?

Mr. Alves: I have no idea. That's why I'm asking to research it. I'm not trying to strong arm anybody. I'm just looking for.

Mr. Strange: So, the question is, does the Board have the ability to claw back a license? And if so, what are they.

Mr. Gennette: For abandonment, yeah.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, Mr. Chairman, wouldn't that be something since we have already signed all those it would be something probably until next year when we do the.

Mr. Silva: Not really. We can revoke it at any time and if it's not, technically we're supposed to if it's found that it's not being in use for a certain amount of time.

Mr. Gennette: Yeah, but I think abuse and abandonment are two completely different things. I think we can stop somebody for abuse immediately. But abandonment, you're kinda taking a privilege away from somebody that held the privilege previously without any just cause.

Mr. Silva: Well, they gotta be using it though.

Mr. Gennette: Well, yeah but I don't know if because they didn't get the license under that pretense, that wasn't, I don't know. I don't know what the legality is. I'm not a lawyer. And I apologize. You were done, right? Mr. Chairman, so, I'm against all this. I love the idea of moving things around to see if people want to take advantage of the opportunities that's available to them or if there's an opportunity for abandoned license to be reallocated somewhere else. I think that's a great idea. But expanding beyond the 39 I'm against is for a couple of different reasons. Well, one reason in particular is I think our small businesses are hurting already. We start incorporating more alcohol businesses and particularly bars, I think that we open up the door for more challenging circumstances for our existing businesses. So, I'm against opening this up. I think we have enough bars. I think we have enough liquor stores. I think, I just don't see the need to open up beyond what the state recommendation is per population. Just my thoughts. With that being said I would still get the information to see what the protocol would be to do that.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman, through you to the Town Administrator, just throwing it out there, I don't know the answer to this I'm guessing I know the answer, but can you convert Wine and Malt open to all alcohol on premises? I mean, theoretically we have two licenses available right now. I'm just asking. I don't know if you can. I'm guessing probably not. But if we have 37 active and we have an allotment of 39 and we have two open, is there anything? Well, we have wine and malt on premises, wine and malt off premises.

Mr. Alves: That's the route I was going.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yeah, that's what I'm saying is do we have the ability to.

Mr. Alves: We do but they'd have to take it as a wine and malt first and then petition for.

Mr. Rosenblum: And then they could petition into what we have now.

Mr. Alves: They'd fall into the category of like Barburrito and Pizza Corner and then they'd be able to come forward and request.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, as a licensing authority we could sit there and over time see what's gonna happen with the mills if something like that goes in and obviously talk with Jeff Daley see what their plans are and see where they are with renovations. And I know that the building up front unfortunately is gonna be a demo but is just hoping to look at it that way.

I'm not as much I mean Mr. Gennette's talking more of like having a bar. I'm not necessarily bar, I'm thinking more like a restaurant, whatever it is, a steakhouse, a smokehouse or something like that.

Mr. Gennette: Yeah, but when you open up all alcohol on premises it could be a bar. It doesn't say restaurant.

Mr. Rosenblum: Right. It can be but.

Mr. Gennette: I mean we have Open Door on here; we have The Moonlight on here, the El Cid's on here, they're bars.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, I understand that but that's also why I'm asking that we have 39 total, but we have two that are vacant right now.

Mr. Gennette: Yeah, and repurposing would be great.

Mr. Silva: I think you still have to apply the same way. Now, I come from a different world where I owned liquor licenses, and I owned all this stuff and I would be not opposed to getting another couple package stores or whatever. It's all revenue that the town needs. I don't see an issue or a problem. Some of them that are on here quite honestly don't really, let's see which ones off premises full. You got five of them. Our Town, Four Seasons.

Mr. Gennette: Well liquor stores are different because those are the all alcohol off premises. So, those are completely different.

Mr. Silva: Right. But that's quite honestly where this came about.

Mr. Gennette: Well, if that's where this came about.

Mr. Silva: It was for off premises all alcohol is what the request came in if I'm not mistaken. That's what came in. We got off into a tangent which is good discussion, but this is what the main thing is. Should we have anymore all alcohol premises off premises, I should say.

Mr. Gennette: Well, we already moved over the Ludlow Shell Convenience and that's not doing anything with alcohol right now, right?

Mr. Silva: Yeah, they are. They actually had the malt and they converted it over to.

Mr. Gennette: But I think the community at large in Ludlow is buying from these five, four, I don't know about Shell, five package stores already. And those package stores are trying to stay above water. I mean, Uncle Bob's, Our Town Variety, Four Seasons, Pop-N-Kork. People have their places in town that they go to. They're not leaving town to get their alcohol. If they're gonna buy alcohol they're gonna go to one of those places already. So, if you open up another store you're just splitting the customer basis. Even if somebody else came in and opened up a store and now they have to compete with the other stores that are existing. You're just splitting the same customers among more package stores. I just don't know how beneficial that is to the package stores we have already.

Mr. Silva: You could say that about every business but anyways that's going somewhere else.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, Mr. Chairman, since we've thrown out our discussion should we get a better light on it through the state as to how to proceed and looking at how we proceed, like we said, we've got these two that are open. Can they be something that someone applies for and then goes to a full or what's the ability to get if you're saying off premises, full alcohol, and then on premises full alcohol.

Mr. Gennette: If you could designate restaurant, like there has to be a restaurant there, I would be all for another on premises. But if you can't designate that it would have to be associated with a restaurant then I'm against it.

Mr. Silva: And the thing is, let me just tell you, you can certainly designate a restaurant, but a restaurant opens and then they find that okay, we're giving food away. This isn't working. We're just gonna keep it open as a bar business. It's been done.

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the Board can have discretion over let's say the town applies for an additional three all alcohol on premises but only allow it for new restaurants. So, if something comes up on the mills and there's.

Mr. Silva: Well, that's our discretion.

Mr. Gennette: So that's what I'm saying.

Mr. Rosenblum: Well, no that's what I was going with too is it's discretionary. So, we could sit there and say, nah I don't want another bar, but I want a restaurant with a bar.

Mr. Silva: That's the thing is to and you get another license it's gotta be opened up to, we talked the mills, we talked, it's gotta be opened up town wide. And the applications gotta come in and we gotta decide where the best fit is. It'll be our discretion again. So, just because we get a license doesn't mean it's gonna go there, for who, everybody applies. So, we will research and see what comes back and find out if we can expand.

Mr. Patel: ... Patel is my son. He is the one who ask for the extra liquor license if it's possible. So, I have one nice really running stores in South Hadley called Liquor Town. Now I'm a Ludlow resident for the last six months. Really nice, enjoying the town. Next month we are opening another store in Palmer. Used to be Bank of American building was closed down and we're trying to put Right now, we are last eight years we have stores called Liquor Town in South Hadley on Route 202. So, that's another reason I want to get an opportunity if I can get in Ludlow to be open a liquor store.

Mr. Gennette: So, it's another liquor store?

Mr. Patel: Yeah. It's called the Liquor Town. So, it's pretty much the same thing and we are quite good success in the town and trying to run very neat and clean business. You can call anybody in South Hadley.

Mr. Silva: So, you're gonna compete with all the other Patel's? I think we got a few Patel's that.

Mr. Patel: Mostly yes you are right they are Pop-N-Kork but I was thinking is more like because when I was in South Hadley I opened from the sketch used to be Adelfia on Route 202 across the street from the hangers. So, I bought that building in 2017 and from the sketch we opened the liquor store, but we bought existing liquor license back then. Now, I was trying for almost two or three years in this town because I bought the land in Ludlow and trying to build the house and I see a lot of new communities and new houses and stuff coming and close to the Mass pike. So, that's the reason, think it is an opportunity. I like to open the stores and same thing we did at the Bank of America building was closed down and we renovate and hopefully end of February or end of March.

Mr. Silva: But Adelfia's was a restaurant.

Mr. Patel: It was a restaurant, yes.

Mr. Silva: So, did you convert that, or?

Mr. Patel: Yeah. Now it's a Liquor Town. It's a liquor store.

Mr. Silva: So, you converted to liquor. Even though they had the on premises.

Mr. Patel: So, we in Massachusetts you cannot have on and off premises in the same building. The previous owner they sell to the different restaurant in town. Then I can bring my

own premises. And then now we are trying to open in Palmer and now if it is possible in Ludlow. That's why my son was trying to make a couple emails to Marc.

Mr. Silva: Well, like we said, we're going to research and see what if and then from there once we have what's gotta be done then we'll decide if it's worth our efforts to go forward.

Mr. Gennette: And if there's any licenses that are available, they can be repurposed the ones that are in town already then.

Mr. Patel: I can help you do that. But it might be better if it is a full liquor license than only beer and wine. It makes a little more difference because if I'm investing that much money.

Mr. Gennette: You missed Turnpike Liquors by a year and a half.

Mr. Patel: I had a couple meetings with Tracy too, but she's very challenging for me.

Resident 1: We have business in South Hadley, and they already approved two new licenses. This was, we are thinking if you guys consider that.

Mr. Gennette: Oh, so South Hadley got two.

Mr. Patel: South Hadley approved actually two new off-premises two licenses.

Mr. Gennette: Did they have to get it through the state, or did they have room on their cap?

Mr. Patel: So, first in you guys and then it goes to the state. State I think not to much if the town is approved then state is not that restricted. I heard if you can Google or like in Boston approved more licenses too because everyone trying to get even more business like I know I mean I have to compete with other Patel's.

Resident 1: In South Hadley we have four licenses. Now there are two more. So, we have to compete with other people.

Mr. Patel: I think when I was in South Hadley it was when I opened in South Hadley basically, I have pretty good successful business. You guys can Google it and see the reviews and stuff but the way I understand, the way I heard from the town is when you have more or stronger business, I think is by price wise and they have more choice. Customers has more choice and then they come with and they have more of a selection. I heard already their existing business one is we are going to be open very soon. So, if it is a more location is trying to get a better price or from my suppliers too so we can try to supply, I mean pass on that way.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

BOARD UPDATES/MISC

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

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, so, first off, I apologize for missing the last meeting. I was a little under the weather. I think I got sick from my Nashville trip. Anyway, I apologize for that. But since then, you guys last nominated me to the Superintendent Search Committee which I said I would be on. I had told Mr. Rosenblum prior to that meeting that you could go ahead and throw me on there. We have since met, and we meet every Thursday night over at the High School library. We had our first organizational meeting; the committee is set. It's a good group. Very, very happy with where we're at, and we should do very well. We have the information that we used three years ago, so we can kind of adopt a lot of that and move it forward and make some adjustments and improvements to it. So, I think it's going to be quite an effective search. I think we should do very well with that.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, Marc, I had asked about the insurance to kind of come up with what the next three years is gonna look like or whatever, if we're gonna adjust splits, some kind of a plan for that. I don't know if you've had the opportunity to take a look at trying to figure out what something like that would look like.

Mr. Strange: So, it's kind of difficult to plan out because the way it works is the Board accepted those provisions of state law. So, now we can present our proposal to the PEC once we do a couple other procedural things and it's really of the town's volition. And then there's a 30-day negotiation period and that negotiation is just how much the PEC wants in return for those changes. The changes we're proposing, we can't go any higher than that. So, we're going to the maximum deductible, which is 2,000 for a single or double, 4,000 for a family. So, that's kind of the end of the road for that process. The other way to do it is to reduce the splits, but the splits have to be individually negotiated with all the unions. So, unless they want to come to the table and reopen the contract and negotiate that split down, we'd have to wait until the next round of negotiations.

Mr. Gennette: So, what my issue is, I think that we're surprising the employees, and I think there's a little bit of shock and awe coming that they have no idea. And if we can plan or even when contract renegotiations are coming up to be able to say this is where we're targeting being in the next five years. However, we get there through whatever negotiations, at least the employees in town know where we're headed. And I'm concerned that there's a lot coming down the pike here as far as insurance and it's gonna hurt. And I don't wanna surprise them if we don't have to. So, any information we can get them to ahead of time, I think it's just super beneficial. But we have to have a plan to be able to do that. I don't know how to accomplish that because it's such an unorthodox situation that we're in right now, but I think it's super important that we try to figure out how we can at least get better information to the employees to be able to plan.

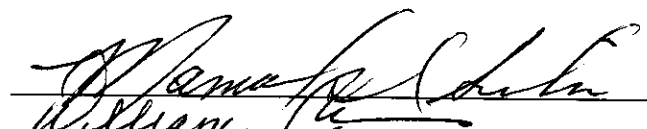
Mr. Strange: We did have a public forum for all the employees.

Mr. Gennette: Yeah. But that's for right now. Right? So, that's what we're facing with right now. So, I'm just saying we're talking about getting hit with insurance again next year.

Mr. Strange: All of that was communicated last year through the IAC. Who are representatives of the unions. So, their responsibility is to communicate that to their constituents. That was last year. We talked about it again for this year. And in this process, we've talked about this is not just a one-year issue. This is a longer-term issue which is why there's a discussion about agreeing to the splits because we're saving \$920,000 this year by increasing the deductible. But we can't do that again and if the unions aren't going to, assuming that there are insurance increases that we can't afford, if the unions don't want to agree to a reduction of a split, there will have to be significant layoffs. This year we're kind of like on the edge of it. But next year if this happens again, we're gonna be up against it.

Mr. Gennette: So, I think that's what needs to be rolled forward, right? So, this is what we're facing, right. I'm not trying to gaslight the community here and get em all fired up. I mean it depends on contract negotiations and stuff like that. But if we can't get our splits to a comfortable level or noticed over the next three years even, then this is what we're faced with. We're faced with a deficit that we have to try to make up. Now that doesn't necessarily mean layoffs, but it's a possibility. So, I just think that people need to be aware of what's happening further down the line if we intend on changing the splits. So, if that's part of the conversation, we need to make that agreement. We need to figure it out.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to close the Select Board meeting at 6:56 P.M. Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.



_____ Chairman

Ludlow Select Board

All related documents can be viewed at the Select Board's Office during regular business hours.