Town of Ludlow
Office of the Select Board

The Meeting of the Select Board held on Tuesday, February 3, 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. – Sgt. Promotion Interview – Officer David Krok

Mr. Silva: You've just been here a short time ago. You know the process that we go through. We'd like to hear from you and give us and the public a little something, an opening statement.

Ofc. Krok: Absolutely. I was here about six months ago. My name's David Krok. Grew up mostly in Chicopee. Relocated to Westfield when I got married and then moved to Ludlow, I think it's been 8 years now that we've been in town and it's been great. My wife Kelly this year we're celebrating 20 years of marriage. I have a 13-year-old son. I have a 10-year-old daughter. We're very active in the community. My son was playing sports up until this year, he's going into high school and my daughter dances over at Alegria Dance and Fitness. Prior to becoming a police officer, I've had a couple different careers. This is kind of my third career. Right out of high school I went and got my associate's degree in criminal justice, thinking that's what I wanted to do 20 years ago, 25 years ago. That was a tall order 25 years ago, policing was very hard to get into. Scored well, just didn't get a call back from anyone. So, I just started working. I did about 10 years in office furniture. Learned the ins and outs of that job and then it was time to start a family. That really wasn't going to provide for my family the way we wanted it to, so I left there, got a job in manufacturing, went back to school and got a second associate's degree in electrical engineering technologies. At my manufacturing plant I went from bottom of the rung, worked my way up to machine operator, that's where I got my engineering degree, got into maintenance, got into engineering, did that for a while. And then my supervisors came up to me and said you're going to be the next supervisor. Like you're going to be the next boss. There was no interview. I wasn't asked, I was told. I was doing a lot there with training. I was putting together programs to help increase the maintenance guys electrical skills cause that was kind of where I was strong in and as they saw me interacting and leading on the floor naturally that's where they put me. So, did that, 2021 came around and I wanted to take another crack at policing. I always had the itch for it. So, with the support of my wife I took the test in 2021. I got a high enough score to get on the list. I got hired January 11, 22 in this room. I was appointed as a patrolman. Did the academy and graduated. I've been out of the academy for 3 years now, with Ludlow for 3 ½. Retired Chief Valadas used to ask me how I liked it, and I always just said I've done a lot of things in my life, and this is the best job I ever had so I can't complain. The town is fantastic. The support of its police. It's a great town to live in and be a part of.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, so you know we always ask a question, and you give an answer. I remember you from when you came in three years ago. It's nice to see that you're really enjoying the town, and we do appreciate the time that you've spent with us. What's the biggest hurdle facing modern police departments today? What do you see?

Ofc. Krok: I think it's just the scrutiny that we're under. Especially, with social media and just the way that we're looked at. Especially, with the way policing is viewed across the country. Like I said we're very fortunate in Ludlow. Our town is very supportive of us. But you don't find that in many places so it's a little hard to do the job when you're constantly having people scrutinize every little behavior or move that you make. It's one of those things. I started my master's program since the last time we were in the interview and that's one of the things we're looking at in one of our classes. It's how do you be a police officer in this environment and always being under that watchful eye, cameras being everywhere. I think it made us have to be a little bit more, have more integrity in everything that we do. We do have to watch our decisions. The old school ways of policing are probably gone because we're always being watched. So, yeah it does make it a little bit more difficult, but I think it makes us better too.

Mr. Gennette: So, just to follow up real quick, pro or con for body cameras?

Ofc. Krok: I am pro bodycam. Mainly because if you look at the outcomes that bodycams have achieved, you're seeing that more and more police are actually doing the job correctly. I think bodycams came out and they thought it was going to be a gotcha moment for policing. Like you guys aren't doing your job. And more and more times officers are vindicated based on bodycam footage, so I am pro for the protection of the public and for the protection of the police.

Mr. Gennette: Thank you. I'm all set Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Krok, good to see you again. I only have one question cause as we know you were here 7 months ago. It was June 24th, I know cause I rewatched everything. The one question I have since you've been here so recently, you came here, did not get the role, what's been your area of focus since then in your role and where do you feel you've made kind of the biggest strides, grown, showing areas of improvement?

Ofc. Krok: So, right when I had interviewed, I just had gotten on the 4 to 12 shift. I was on midnights for almost 2 ½ years. That was better for my family. As soon as it worked out, I got 4 to 12, the call volume, the types of calls I've seen, the interactions I've been dealing with, have helped me grow. I started the master's program at AIC this past year, focusing on my education, all the electives that I'm taking within that master program are actually focused on the leadership side. I got appointed as an FTO. So, I'm currently training one of the new officers that we just hired and I also took on the role of one of the members of the Safety Committee. But the call volume I've received, the types of calls, the group of guys I work with is fantastic because we'll get a call and then we'll go back to the station afterwards and we just pull up books, and we brainstorm. It's such a great learning environment that I feel way more comfortable in myself and the job now.

Mr. Alves: And just to clarify, those are all great things. The FTO, starting your masters, that's all been since last June?

Ofc. Krok: That's all been since last June.

Mr. Alves: Thank you. That's the only question I had.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Krok, welcome back. So, my question again since we've met you before, we've seen you before, how would you motivate officers to maintain high standards?

Ofc. Krok: So, I mentioned this last June and there's actually been some conversation within the department, specifically one of our sergeants but I think we have the ability at Ludlow to do some more in-house training. We have guys with fantastic skills. We have multiple guys on our SRT team. We have academy instructors. We have firearm instructors. We have all these things, I know one of our sergeants went to a ground control and defense class. It's

hard to get good training in policing. Even some of the stuff the MPTC puts out is sometimes just to check a box. I think we have the right guys here where we could do some of that stuff in-house and if we're training more often in-house with guys we know it's gonna foster this environment of growth. And then we all can hold each other to the standards that are being set by our instructor as the guys in the department with the experience I think that'll motivate everybody to want to be better police officers.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you.

Mr. Silva: My only question for you is, you're coming from patrolman, now to sergeant, what do you think is gonna be your biggest hurdle moving into that position?

Ofc. Krok: So, like I said, I had previous supervisor experience and leadership experience transfers. It's dealing with people. My last job I had about 15 mechanics underneath me. I was basically running the maintenance side of the plant. Three hundred pieces of equipment and it was a 24/7 operation. So, it's not really the people or management side, honestly, I think it's gonna be in the in-house administrative stuff. That's gonna be a whole new thing for me to learn. In IMC patrolmen do limited things. We have our reports we do but that's about it. But then now we have bookings, and now we have other things. We have tracking evidence so there's gonna be some stuff on the administrative level and procedures that I don't know that I'm gonna have to learn and adapt to pretty quickly.

Mr. Silva: Thank you. With that, I think we're all set here. Closing comments.

Ofc. Krok: Again, I know I haven't been on very long, but I do have previous supervisor experience, I got some life experience. You know, I never thought I'd be here. I really didn't. If you asked me ten years ago if this was ever gonna happen I wouldn't. Again, I'm grateful to be in this position. I'm grateful to be in this room right now and just to even have the opportunity. Again, we have a great department in Ludlow, I'm proud to be part of it and if I'm chosen, if I'm selected you can expect a high-quality product. I'm gonna do this job that best that I can.

Mr. Silva: Chief, you got anything or Marc, do you have anything?

Chief Brenna: I think we'll wait until the end.

6:00 P.M. – Sgt. Promotion Interview – Officer Isaac Santana

Mr. Silva: Officer Santana, you've been here. You know the process. We still would like you to open with an opening statement.

Ofc. Santana: Absolutely. Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you guys again for the position of sergeant with the Ludlow Police Department. Since my last interview, I've taken time to learn, reflect, and continue developing both professionally and personally. I believe the way I carried myself following the decision at my last interview and the work I've done speaks to my character, resilience, and commitment to this department. I'm a husband and a father of five. I've been a Ludlow resident since 2019. I'm goal driven and extremely hard working and I always work to put myself in the best position both personally and professionally. Since my last interview, I've completed my bachelor's degree in criminal justice, and I continued my coursework towards my master's degree. Professionally I remain focused on serving the residents of Ludlow with pride and respect. I've continued my role as a department Community Liaison Officer, participating in numerous community events through organizations such as the Senior Center, Ludlow CARES, and the Ludlow Rotary Club. I've also worked to be a resource to the department by obtaining additional certifications which were included in my packet. Most notably I've maintained my defensive tactic certification which is extremely difficult to obtain and maintain. Recently, at Chief Brennan's request, I conducted a defensive tactics class for our veteran officers. An opportunity that benefits both our officers and the department. As a sergeant with the Ludlow Police Department, I intend to continue learning as growth is essential when entering a leadership role. I will serve the Town of Ludlow and its residents with professionalism, respect, and integrity and I also intend to foster an environment with trust and mutual respect among officers that I supervise. One that is both productive and

supportive. I believe effective leadership means ensuring officers feel supported, have the resources they need to succeed and them to know that they have my full commitment and experience behind them as they pursue their professional goals.

Mr. Gennette: So, listen, I've been kinda following Officer Santana since I was the one that kinda moved for him to come in from Holyoke so much like Mr. Krok it's a pleasure to see you again and we appreciate all the work that you do here in Ludlow. We certainly love having ya. What is the biggest hurdle facing police departments nowadays? What would you say is the biggest?

Ofc. Santana: I think the biggest hurdle is public perception. As we all know, everyone's entitled to their opinion and a lot of times things that are covered by the media or events that happen around the country can affect us even here in Ludlow even if it's across the country or long distance away. So, I think it's maintaining public trust within Ludlow and letting them know that we're the best trained officers in the Commonwealth and we'll treat everyone with respect and dignity and the way they deserve to be treated. Like in any profession, there's a couple bad apples, but we just need to work as a department to keep everyone informed, effective communication, and then by our actions, how we're responding to calls, letting them know that what might have happened in another part of the country isn't necessarily gonna happen here and to continue to have trust in us. And I think that we've done very well with our social media, getting involved in the community, and showing our residents that we are above the standard we're not just working to maintain that standard that we're above it.

Mr. Gennette: Perfect. Thank you. One quick follow up, yes or no, bodycams?

Ofc. Santana: Yes.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Santana, good to see you again. Similar to Mr. Krok who was just in here, you were here seven months ago, you did not get the role at that time, you touched that a little bit in your opening, can you take me through since that time what's been your area of focus, kind of where you feel you've grown, strengthen, and showing improvements since that time?

Ofc. Santana: So, I will admit that since the interview the first time I did watch my interview several times and as with anything, any opportunity that you have in front of you is an opportunity to learn and to grow from. I wanted to conduct myself in a manner that would reflect not sourness or someone that would be bitter, I wanted to be professional, and I wanted to grow from this. In that time, I focused more on not my past which is Holyoke PD and being at the registry as a manager but using that to continue to grow as a Ludlow Police Officer and to bring more to our department. So, I took the time to continue getting certifications but then apply those certifications to our department. So, as I mentioned, doing the defensive tactics portion. There's a lot of departments in the Commonwealth that don't have a DT instructor. It's I believe a 12 or 14 day class that's all day long and then maintaining it you have to go every year, every two years to recertify and know the most recent standards and as we all know defensive tactics is one of the biggest areas of liability for our department. So, we have to make sure that we're sound. So, I take a lot of pride in that, and I worked with Chief Brennan to be able to apply my knowledge to the department and help bring a benefit to us. So, that was a moment of pride for me, conducting a veteran in-service within our department. It was nothing new that our guys hadn't already known but it was something that we haven't touched on for a long time. So, I think bringing those resources to our department to maybe help costs or just to make us better trained to be able to give the best service to our residents that's what I wanted to focus on and I think that in the seven months I've really honed in on Ludlow and moving forward and how I was going to grow rather than kinda stay dependent on my past.

Mr. Alves: Great. That's all I had. Thank you.

Mr. Rosenblum: Officer Santana, welcome back. I have only one question, how would you motivate officers to maintain high standards?

Ofc. Santana: So, for me I believe that that started day one when I came to Ludlow. I wanted to assert myself and let the guys know my true colors. Let them know that I'm approachable,

reliable, someone that they could depend on, and I have made it a goal of mine that if I were to be promoted that I would still maintain myself the same way. And I think that effective communication, keeping the guys in the loop as to what is going on. And when I have to make a tough decision as a sergeant for an example, if you're in a pursuit, we're police officers, that's the rah-rah moment, we want to get the bad guy. As a supervisor you have to make that tough decision to be like there's too much liability we need terminate and that might make some of the guys, I don't want to say disappointed, but they feel like they wanna obtain the goal which is to stop the crime and protect the public. So, having that communication, explain to them the reason why you did that I think that will be morale and continue to keep officers motivated to continue working to that high standard that you mentioned. Like I said, I think it's effective communication and just explaining yourself and just staying humble and just explaining why and if they have any questions just kind of bounce it back and forth and have that open dialogue.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you very much.

Mr. Silva: Officer Santana, you're coming from patrolman into the sergeant spot, what do you think is gonna be your biggest hurdle as you step forward?

Ofc. Santana: I think the biggest hurdle is conducting myself in that admin role. Learning the admin side of things. As a police officer I've done it for 10 years now, I'm confident in my skill set there. Like I said, I have a really good rapport with my officers on midnight which would be my desired shift if I were to get the position. So, it would be a smooth transition with them. So, I think it would just be the admin side of things, our scheduling, things like that. But I will say I am very knowledgeable on our contract and the ins and outs of the department so it would just be more of the line items and things that I haven't had experience with yet. But in the time that I've been preparing for this position I have worked with some of the other sergeants, specifically with Sergeant Wielblad who I work with on midnights to kind of get my feet wet and get some of that experience ahead of time just so that I don't jump into completely with no experience but I've taken the opportunities when it's presented to take the opportunity to learn.

Mr. Silva: Thank you. With that, closing comment.

Ofc. Santana: So, I have a five-page closing statement. No, I'm just kidding. That was one of the things that I learned from my last interview. Sometimes too much information is not the best and sometimes short and sweet is the best. So, I just want to thank you all again for giving me this opportunity. I do feel that I've put in the time and the effort and that if the Select Board were to give me the opportunity you wouldn't regret it and you're getting a top notch, at least an officer that wants to be a supervisor, that wants to give you top notch service to this town.

6:15 P.M. – Sgt. Promotion Interview – Officer Jacob Stokowski

Mr. Silva: Officer Stokowski, you probably know the drill here. I'd like to have you make an opening statement. Tell us a little ...

Ofc. Stokowski: First and foremost, I'd like to take time to thank you guys for allowing me to come here and tell you my story and for everything you guys do for the community. We certainly appreciate it. For those of you that may not know me or familiar with me my name is Jacob Stokowski. Been here in Ludlow almost all of my life. My parents moved here when I was two. They saw the opportunity and wanted a good quality of life for my sister and I so we've been here. My wife is also from Ludlow; we have two young girls that we want to raise here as well. My wife was a former police officer here and she's now a special police officer, so we certainly have some time and commitment to this community in making it a safe and better environment for all children to grow up. We both graduated Ludlow High School 2006. Very good year I might add. From there I went to Springfield Technical Community College where I got my associate's degree in criminal justice and then I moved on to Westfield State, got my bachelor's in the same. I plan to in the next couple months sign up for my master's program whether it's through Westfield or AIC, but we'll get there. I've been with the department for a total of 16 years. Three years as a special police officer and then what'll actually be 13 years tomorrow, February 4th, that'll be my 13th mark for full-time. In those 16

years with this department, this year marked my ten-year mark as a firearms instructor for the department. One of our armors, so I work, maintain on all our firearms, keep records, do any service that needs to be done. Since 2018, I've been a field training officer. So, especially now considering we have a young department, I've trained the better half of our department that we have now. Which has been a great honor to be a part of. When I went to the training class, I remember the chief that taught it he said if you're here in this room now, you're here because a leader in your department saw something in you that they want to see in the rest of the department and that definitely resonated with me throughout my career. I've also been a part of the Ludlow Special Response Team. Which as you may or not know evolved into the Hampden County Regional Team. I was a squad leader there. Responsible for a handful of guys. Working my way up the chain of command. Then I was an Assistant Team Leader and then once we had enough guys on our team, we reached a higher tier where we created the Sniper Team, and I was in charge of that. The commander at the time thought I was capable of doing so but it was new to this area, new to this team, so I had to start from the ground up. Finding out policies, procedures, writing lesson plans, keeping track of all the records, training requirements. Really setting the bar and then exceeding the standards compared to what other teams and everybody was doing all while carrying out the missions that we were doing. Aside from that I've been on the bike patrol. I was an ALICE instructor, teaching our active shooter evacuation plans for the schools.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, I was here when you were in before and I've seen you since and thank you for your continued employment with Ludlow. We really do appreciate your time here and your wife. I just wanna ask, what is the biggest hurdle facing modern police departments today?

Ofc. Stokowski: I think the biggest hurdle is probably the disconnect or connection or the public perception of the public of what we do. What we're constantly doing. We get traffic complaints which we see on Facebook posts, the community pages and everything. Which we do monitor. We try to pay attention to them. But people drive by the parking lot and they see a parking lot full of cruisers and just assume we're inside smoking and joking, which that may not necessarily be the case. We certainly have more guys out and about than the cruisers that they see when they drive by. But we could be inside working on reports, training, or we're just out elsewhere and that's what they see. We all have cell phones, access to social media. We see what's going on in the world where police in other agencies are doing one thing with their own agenda but the public sees something else from a different angle and then it spirals from there. It all becomes; well, I saw them do this. I saw them do this. It's like playing that telephone game when you were a kid. What starts here is completely different than what's over there and just trying to break that disconnect like where we have our social media pages of like hey, here's what we're doing. This is what we did this month. Here's what we did throughout the year and exposing our arrest logs of our productivity and everything and even showing, everybody has a cellphone and everything nowadays so there's always videos of us doing something, but I think that's probably the biggest hurdle that we run into. What we're doing, what people think we're doing and what's actually going on.

Mr. Gennette: Good answer. Yes or no. Bodycams?

Ofc. Stokowski: Yes. Absolutely.

Mr. Alves: Good to see you, Mr. Stokowski. Full disclosure, the other two gentlemen that were here have interviewed before. I asked them a different question than what I'm gonna ask you. But the question I'm gonna ask you I asked them the last time. Can you give me an example of a time where you had to use discretion in enforcing the law and how it led to a positive outcome?

Ofc. Stokowski: So, the one that always comes to mind, it was closer to the start of my career then it was now, but it was a ... ran a license plate for an elderly couple that was pulling into the Walgreen's and gentleman was going inside and the plate was expired and her license had an issue with it. All stuff that could be corrected online. By law I could tow the vehicle, make them get a ride or bring them to the station until they can figure something else out. But after talking with the lady, I explained the issue, why I was stopping her and everything, then she tells me that her husband was going inside to pick up his medications. I could tell

they were not exactly mobile and the only reason they were out was to get his medications. They planned on heading straight back home. So, part of that instead of, like I said, you could tow the vehicle and cite them, have them go to court and everything. She didn't have a smart phone; she had a good old fashioned flip phone. No other means of communication. No way to have someone come help her out or anything. So, I took it upon myself to let her use my phone to access the RMV to take care of what she needed to take care of. Which automatically gets confirmed through our system and then they were legally able to operate that motor vehicle and get home. They weren't towed. It was much more of a positive outcome and again back to that public perception, it's like, yeah, I could have done this. I chose not to do that. In the end, I remember she wrote a letter thanking me and everything which that it was definitely a humbling moment for me. But like I said, that's always one that sticks to mind.

Mr. Alves: Thank you.

Mr. Rosenblum: Officer Stokowski, welcome. One question myself. How would you motivate officers to maintain high standards?

Ofc. Stokowski: So, I think I can start right off the get go with the FTO program. It's something I like doing. As a sergeant you kind of take back a little bit from that role. You're obviously inside doing things but we have sergeants that are in charge of the FTO program. They take everybody's reports at the end of the day, tally them up, and give a final outcome for the week. But right away you can paint that picture of you as a police officer and what to expect of that person and I remember our last round of new hires, taking them out and I always give a round down of here's what I do, here's what I like to do, here's what I might not be knowledgeable in. So, if you have a question in this, ask this person. If you have a question in this, absolutely come to me. But then giving my background, like telling people I was a sniper on a SWAT Team and people hear that and there like oh my god that's awesome. Of course, in your mind you see it in a picture, you're standing in a ghillie suit with a huge rifle hiding in the woods when reality that's not the case at all. Usually, you're in a car doing surveillance, certainly you have all the right gear and everything, but it automatically sets that standard of okay we have multiple FTO's and I got the opinions of this person here, their personality, and this kind of helps them shape of who they want to be throughout their career. And as a leader you can do the same where, here's my expectations and I work 4 to 12, one of the busiest shifts and that shift is a well oiled machine. Obviously, we joke back and forth of like day shift, night shift, second shift, we pat ourselves on the back absolutely, but the communication is great between us, dispatch, the supervisors. They know what to expect out of us. We know what to expect out of them. We all trust each other. I think that helps, again, paint that picture of, hey this is how we do things, this is how we want things done, and people look up to us and continue to grow.

Mr. Rosenblum: Thank you.

Mr. Silva: Officer Stokowski, you're going from patrolman to sergeant, what do you think is going to be your biggest hurdle moving into that?

Ofc. Stokowski: I think my biggest hurdle is probably gonna be, there's still a learning curve, even though it's the same building, same things that we may or may not do. We have a lot of officer in charge coverage if a supervisor doesn't fill it, patrolmen can step up and take that. I think there's still with the constant change in policing, patrolmen might learn something new at in-service that you might not even heard yet. So, keeping up to date on all that. Last year I took several supervisor classes on my own and one of them was right at the start of the class the instructor asked, how many of your departments have an FTO program? Everybody raises their hand and then it was, how many departments have an FTO program for the supervisors? And I think two people out of the thirty in the class raised their hands. That's one thing I talked with other supervisors that are in charge of the FTO program with our department is hey maybe we should do this because there are things we want to make sure we can meet these standards, check these boxes, and not every single arrest is the same and that's both for patrol and as a supervisor. But you want to make sure you're doing the right thing all the time.

Mr. Silva: Thank you. With that, closing comments.

Ofc. Stokowski: I want to thank you for your time. I know there's a lot that I have to say in my packet, resume. Never in my life would I go back and say hey you're gonna be a police officer doing one of the most elite things you can as a law enforcement officer. You're gonna be on SWAT team. You're gonna be in charge of these people. You're gonna do this, this, and this. Wouldn't believe it at all. The special police was certainly a humbling experience, and I remember, right before I left, one of the senior officers before he retired he told me don't forget where you came from and that was as far as like hey some guys move on to, they get hired from special police to full-time and just kinda forget about the specials. Or they just move to different agencies or find new careers all together. But what he said stuck in and that's where I kind of give back to. I see the younger guys on the specials. They wanna learn. They're in the same position that I was in. So, I always try to give back to my peers and everybody else and the community. So, I want to thank you again for your time and look forward to hearing.

Mr. Silva: In your opinion, who is a better officer? You or your wife?

Ofc. Stokowski: Being a firearms instructor I've learned I got to serpentine if I ever get in trouble. I got a chance, but she takes the cake as far as the specialty stuff that she was doing.

Mr. Silva: The correct answer is my wife. Stay happy.

Ofc. Stokowski: Yeah. I know she's watching this so I'm gonna duck when I walk out.

Mr. Silva: Now we'll move on to the chief.

Chief Brennan: Thank you. So, for tonight I'm gonna ask that you promote two from these interviews. So, the gentlemen that you just interviewed, that's from the certified civil service list. They've all took the sergeants exam, civil service test and passed and that's why they're here tonight as candidates. One of the positions will be permanent. That is to replace Sgt. Shameklis who retired on January 31st. And the other will be a provisional appointment and that is to replace Lt. Tierney, who is provisional. When he was promoted provisional it vacates that sergeant position so we're looking to fill that eventually. That position will become permanent once we have a lieutenants list to promote a lieutenant. That's what we're looking to do tonight, promote two out of three. I wish we could promote all three and I'm sure you're probably thinking the same thing. But we only have two positions currently.

Mr. Alves: I have a procedural question. With the provisional, so how does that work when it becomes full-time? Whoever needs to reinterview with that slate of candidates at that time?

Chief Brennan: As appointing authority, I think you might have the discretion on how you want to do that, but it would ultimately be an appointment.

Ms. Ribeiro: I mean you could just make the appointment. You could go and you could interview them at that point but because that individual is technically provisional, which is recognized by civil service, you wouldn't have to interview again. You would have to formally make the appointment, but you wouldn't have to go through this process.

Mr. Alves: Thank you. I just didn't know how that works.

Chief Brennan: It's a sergeant's position so you're looking to promote if this is a first line leader. That position has got a lot of responsibility. They're interacting directly with our officers every night. We count on them to act in the absence of command staff. Certainly, myself, three in the morning, seven at night, if I'm not there, sometimes the lieutenants not there on the weekends they are the department for all intents and purposes when the chief and command staff are not there. So, there's a lot of responsibly on sergeants and I just recognize not just these candidates but our sergeants for the work that it is. It's one of the most stressful jobs in the department.

Mr. Silva: Thank you. Gentlemen anything else? Anyone else?

Mr. Gennette: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Okay so look it usually comes down to three wonderful candidates otherwise it would be super easy all the time. You got an amazing staff top to

bottom. None of this is ever easy. So, I had to go through the list. First off, they all answered my questions the same. So, all of them said that basically public sentiment is the biggest hurdle in some way shape or form. That was the biggest and they all said bodycams. And then they have a myriad of experiences all relative to kind of the same thing. So, for me it came down to who was the best fit for this, and I looked at Mr. Krok, and he is certainly an up and comer. He is certainly very comfortable in sitting in this chair and having this conversation. Three years in and he looks like he's probably going to do very well in advancement. Santana, I thought, was probably the most put together in his response. I thought he was very clear that he has a career path that he's interested in. And then I also thought with Mr. Stokowski who has the longest experience that I also thought man he is a patrolman. Even when he's talking you can hear it in his voice. He is a police officer through and through. Not to say that the other guys aren't but it really resonates that he's the on the streets guy and stuff like that. Civil service list 1, 2, & 3 in order is how we heard them so, for me, I felt that Mr. Santana met all issues across the board. He's got the experience, he's got the education, he was well put together, so he is my first pick. He is the one that I'm gonna go with. And I have to say that Mr. Krok is my second pick. Not to take anything away from Mr. Stokowski but I think that he was also well prepared for this. I think Mr. Stokowski probably has a little more time that he needs for interviewing. But that's my recommendations 1, 2, and 3. I just was thinking, I should probably make this note because Mr. Santana was second on the civil service list, that in order for me to go outside the civil service list there has to be some extenuating circumstances and between his education, which matches Mr. Krok's, he surpasses Mr. Krok simply with experience. So, that's the reason that I went in opposition to the civil service list.

Mr. Alves: Funny, because someone asked me the other day what I hate most about sitting in this chair and it's this. I would have thought it was dog hearings or whatever, no, it's this. You're dealing with people's livelihoods and you're making a decision on, you know, we're not in those doors every day. We do the best we can with the packets we're provided, with the interviews and all that. All three of these candidates have their positives when compared to the others. You look at Mr. Santana, long tenure here, another city, Holyoke. Pursuing a master's degree. Heavily involved in the community. You look at Mr. Stokowski; I'll always give a lot of credit to folks that are quote unquote homegrown. Been in this town their whole life. Stayed here. Been committed here. He has the longest tenure with the department. And then you look at Mr. Krok, obviously top of the candidate list. As Mr. Gennette alluded to, shorter length of time but I really liked his answer to what he's done since that last time he's been here. All the things he's gotten himself involved in. So, similar, I think Mr. Gennette you said it, education, experience, I take a look at those things not only exam score but education, experience, exposure, and like I said how you interview in the chair, length of time in town, so for me I would have Officer Krok 1 and I have a tie between Mr. Santana and Mr. Stokowski for number 2.

Mr. Rosenblum: I mean we go a lot of times we always look I think that when we as Mr. Alves said is one of the first things I had to do within my first year about seven years ago as a Select Board member was pick a police chief and one of them is sitting here right now. It was past Chief Valadas and I believe it was Lt. Irwin was it that time. For a week and a half knowing that we had that coming up it's like you were saying these are the worst because I've always said our department always seems very a good gel in the department. Everyone works together and we have a great team. So, we have patrolman Stokowski who's been here the longest and to be honest, I mean this is just my view, I think Mr. Gennette kind of said it the same way, so much strength in what you do on the street and the fact also is that and it's not to say that you wouldn't be a sergeant, but it's just, I think that kind of looking at that and also is that there's still a little bit of time in between bachelor's but now you're going for your master's, Mr. Santana's been in here before. He's impressed us very well. And again with Mr. Krok as you said you bring a lot of life experience. I mean you have supervisory roles. I could really sit here and say again I could take any one of you as one, but I would probably go Officer Santana, Krok, then Stokowski. So, basically, I think I have the same as Mr. Gennette. Of course we can all be swayed at some point.

Mr. Gennette: They're all close. Is that your final?

Mr. Rosenblum: That's my final.

Mr. Silva: It's just so close. I always look at the candidates and I love tenure. I really love tenure. I mean when an officer is in Ludlow and the way police is right now moving, we've hired some and they're here a year and they move on to the state. It's a very big for me for somebody to hang in there and work for Ludlow for the years that they do. The other thing that I always look for, and I always ask is the chief cause he works with all of you, he knows better quite honestly. I know it's a tough situation for the chief to actually try or actually say who they would like to promote, who they like to move forward. I don't know if the chief does have any recommendation or he doesn't want to. It's different. He probably does have the recommendation, but he really feels that he probably shouldn't.

Chief Brennan: I can't pick my favorite child doing it on you know it's tough. It's very difficult. I respect the decision you have to make tonight and as always because these things are so difficult. I actually take pride in the fact that it is a difficult decision because you have such three qualified candidates that creates this difficulty. So, you're promoting somebody to sergeant, I think each one of these candidates represented themselves very well tonight as who they are as individuals. I think you have their packets, so you understand their education, their experience level, their knowledge and abilities, and capabilities to accept a promotion. So, I think you taking all that, the community service and all that is I think it's all correct to play in your decision making.

Mr. Alves: That's a good political answer.

Mr. Gennette: Avoided that tactfully.

Mr. Silva: The other thing is that gentlemen well now we're in a tough position having our fifth Selectmen pass this past year and we can be deadlocked at certain votes that we have, and we've tried to not have that kind of a situation where you're struggling with how do you break the impasse. So, I had it a little different, but it probably wouldn't change because I love tenure, I've always gone with experience and how long they've been here and how much they've helped the community. But since we do have two votes for Officer Santana, I would have to say that even my vote would not change the majority there. So, because we have two votes for Officer Santana, I think I will entertain a motion from one of you gentlemen.

Mr. Gennette: You haven't actually voted.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's another deflection right there. Political. Political. You guys are great.

Mr. Silva: It's not deflection. But I actually honestly, I did even though you might not think so I did say I like the tenure. When an officer's here I think that they deserve to be moved forward and then move on to the next. I've always done that.

Mr. Rosenblum: I don't disagree.

Mr. Gennette: So, is Mr. Stokowski your first?

Mr. Silva: Yeah. I would vote for Mr. Stokowski because he's been here for longer. He deserves it. That's all I'm doing. But like I said it wouldn't change anything.

Mr. Gennette: So, by my count right now we have Officer Santana at two and a half and a tie between Officers Krok and Stokowski at one and a half. That's what I have for votes each.

Mr. Silva: No, you have two for Santana. Right? And Anthony voted for

Mr. Gennette: We have two and a half. Two and a half for Santana because he said one for Officer Krok and then he did half. No, sorry, what was your vote again?

Mr. Rosenblum: Well, you can make the motion for the one permanent because by the Chairman's math.

Mr. Gennette: Alright, so, Mr. Chairman

Mr. Alves: How it totals doesn't matter.

Mr. Rosenblum: It's just how the votes are I'm saying.

Mr. Gennette: We have our first one, we just don't have our second one.

Mr. Rosenblum: Well, you can do two separates.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to promote Officer Isaac Santana to the position of Sgt. effective Sunday, February 8 @ midnight. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to appoint Officer David Krok as a provisional Sgt. Effective Sunday, February 8 @ midnight. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE

26-010 Chief Pease, Ludlow Fire Department – Notifying the Board that they have received $360 in additional donations for the 2026 Ambulance Subscription year. Board to approve depositing into the Ambulance Grants & Gifts Account for future use by the Ludlow Ambulance Service.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to approve the deposit of $360 into the Ambulance Grants & Gifts Account for future use by the Ludlow Ambulance Service. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Alves: I'd like to thank these folks because these are donations in addition to the $50 subscription, Mr. & Mrs. David Brogle, Ms. Susana Aguero, Mr. James O'Donnell, Mr. & Mrs. Allan Clowes, Ms. Joyce Breault, Ms. Jamie Lee McCarthy, Ms. Joanne Laplante, and Mr. Jose Coredeiro. Thank you.

Mr. Gennette: Second for discussion but Marc walked away so it's gonna be a mute point. I just wanna make sure that it's okay to move these funds into the Ambulance Subscription Fund, since it's not Ambulance Subscription revenue.

Mr. Silva: Okay. So, would you like to hold off on that vote or motion, or do you want to proceed with it?

Mr. Gennette: Go ahead and proceed with it. I don't mind.

Mr. Silva: Well obviously if quite honestly, I think if it's not okay to do it then we'll have to not do it.

Mr. Gennette: Okay. So, then just make a note that the question was raised and I don't mind passing it. I don't mind money.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, sorry, I missed this too. The Joe & Anna C. Dias foundation also donated $1,000. That's at the bottom of the letter.

Mr. Silva: And while we're doing it, Marc, James had a question that this is okay to move as they requested.

Mr. Strange: Which One?

Mr. Rosenblum: The donations to the ambulance.

Mr. Gennette: So, it's donations. Can it be placed into the Ambulance Subscription Fund if it's not an Ambulance Subscription fee?

Mr. Strange: I think that they're separate accounts. So, the subscription fund is for subscriptions. This is a gift fund like a donation gift.

Mr. Gennette: I know but they wanted to put the gift money in the ambulance subscription account.

Mr. Alves: No, Ambulance Grants & Gifts Account.

Mr. Gennette: Oh, ambulance gifts and grants is different?

Mr. Silva: Yes.

26-011 Jamie Tomas, DPW – Notifying the Board that the Snow and Ice Budget has been expended as of January 23, 2026. Board to declare State of Emergency and notify Massachusetts Department of Revenue so over expended invoices may be processed for payment.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, Marc, are we okay to make that declaration that we are in a state of emergency? You need it, right?

Mr. Strange: Yes.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette that in accordance with Chapter 44, Section 31of MGL the Department of Public Works to declare State of Emergency in the Town of Ludlow and notify Massachusetts Department of Revenue so over expended invoices may be processed for payment. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

26-012 Kim Batista, Town Clerk – Request the Board to approve Police Officers for the upcoming election.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve Police Officers for the upcoming election. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

26-013 Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection – Release Notification & Notice of Responsibility RE: Ludlow Interstate 90 East Mile Marker 54 Diesel Fuel Release.

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

26-014 NextEra Energy Services – NextEra Energy Services Massachusetts Disclosure Label.

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

26-015 Tighe & Bond – Quarterly Inspection Report for Holyoke Street Landfill.

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

26-016 Kim Batista, Town Clerk – Letter of resignation from Michael Brennan for Precinct 6 Representative Town Meeting Member. Board to place the opening on the 2027 ballot.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to accept the resignation from Michael Brennan for Precinct 6 Representative Town Meeting Member and to place the opening on the 2027 ballot. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Mr. Gennette: I really have to say that I really like that the police chief is stepping down as a precinct member. I just always thought that that was a big conflict of interest to have that there, so that the fact that he recognizes that and is being proactive and stepping away says a lot about our new police chief. I just wanted to make a comment and offer the respect.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to discuss FY27 budget. (tabled from January 20, 2026)

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, I am not sure how you want to handle it. There's a lot of moving pieces here. A lot of things have changed even since the last time in two days it's changed.

So, I'm not sure if you want me to go over sort of the information that we presented in the email and I'll do my best to highlight the changes. That would be the way I would do it.

Mr. Alves: I think that's a good idea.

Mr. Strange: Okay, again, just to reiterate this is sort of an ever evolving changing process. The budget. We're constantly getting actually updated numbers from all kinds of different sources. So, there's been a lot of changes even over the past week or so to the budget. I think the headline here is we were in a not great position for our fiscal 27 budget and now we're certainly in a much more manageable spot which is great news. A couple updates that we got just this week were as we previously had budgeted for 18% increase in our health insurance premiums for fiscal year 27. That was on the recommendation of our MIIA rep who had the latest information. And so, what happened was that was based upon a trust average of 16% and then our loss runs were a little bit higher than everybody else who's in the trust. And what happened was instead of a 16% trust average increase for all the member municipalities there was actually an 8.3% increase. That 8% reduction was due to the Blue Cross Blue Shield will no longer be covering GLP-1 medications after July 1, 2026. And they also renegotiated some pharmacy and prescription reimbursements with their providers. So, the trust average was 8.3. Our increase is actually 7.5% which is actually below the trust average, and we had asked MIIA for an explanation as to why that happened. It's an extremely complicated process. A lot of different factors go into it but the bottom line here is our health insurance increase is gonna be 7.5%. That changed the game in terms of our budget dramatically. We also received the governor's proposal. The governor issued her budget proposal last week and the local aid for Ludlow comparative to fiscal year 26 was plus 370,000 which is also great news for us. So, the way the state budget process works is the governor comes out with her proposal at the end of January as she did. The House will now come up with their own budget, and the Senate will come up with a budget and there will be a conference committee towards the late spring. And the conference committee will come up with the final budget. That typically does not get finalized until May, June, July, sometimes afterwards. As a matter of practice, we typically will stick with the governor's proposal as the basis for our budgeting purposes. But that's sort of where we are. The plus 370,000 from the governor's proposal. And there were a couple other sort of pretty standard adjustments to the budget to a couple of line items. But ultimately, currently our excess capacity is $222,000. So, excess capacity means we're not taxing to our levy capacity for the year which is great news. So, that's sort of where we are right now. There are a few items left outstanding that the Board may want to consider. I'll certainly be considering and putting together the level two budget that we present to the Select Board. One is the increased deductibles for the employee health insurance plans. We had originally been considering a jump from 500 to 1,000 for the deductibles up to a 2,000 for a single 4,000 for a family. Considering these changes, I think we're back down to considering a smaller deductible increase to 1,000 for a single person and 2,000 for a family. That would save the town about $400,000. Obviously, those savings are not currently contemplated within that $220,000 excess capacity. There's also new positions and reclassifications that were requested, we're looking at those and suggesting that most of them get approved by the Board and if so, they would add about another $134,000 in costs. There are some FTE reductions that we may want to be looking at. We don't really want to talk about them publicly just yet but anywhere from one to four FTE reductions for fiscal 27. And then lastly another suggestion considering sort of the situation that we're in now with the budget is increasing the school budget even further up to 3%, which would cost the town another $190,000. Obviously, very complicated stuff, a lot of moving parts. So, happy to sort of expand upon anything that we just explained. Try to simplify it. Try to clarify whatever you guys want to do.

Mr. Silva: Thank you. Certainly, I do wanna say that, explain some of these things and moving parts as you say that that's happened is we are now, the process we we're doing a lot earlier in trying to get the budget in order we look at things way early I think but is it beneficial or not? I think it is because we have certain numbers that we have to deal with and later on when we get closer, we might be in dire straits where we knew what we had to do if things came to fruition and we knew what, how would we balance? So, it's good and as you forward, things change. Like we said, we didn't have the state's numbers in yet. We didn't have the actual insurance premiums that we we're gonna have to pay. So, with that people have to understand that we're just looking at very preliminary numbers so they gotta sit tight and wait until we get closer as we are. And we're still not there because there's still certain

things that we need to look at and from there, then we will get closer. But I just wanna say that people should sit back and relax a little bit because there was so much moving around, so many things going on that we're trying to do the best.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, can I expand on that? I don't know if you're done. I just wanna continue that point. So, to that point it's great to start early for transparency purposes. The risk of that is everybody sees the rough draft, right? And knowing budgeting and doing budget in my line of work, numbers change constantly and you're only as good as the information that you have at the time. And it's much better to start very conservatively, which a lot of those figures were, and peel back in a positive way then start with pie in the sky and then coming down on everyone the 11th hour and saying oh we need to reduce this, reduce this, reduce this. That's all I wanted to say on that point.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman, so, obviously, Marc and I have been going back and forth on a lot of things same as me as I do budgeting as well. And my position is just there was a couple things, I just wanted to again not saying positions and things of that nature but just kind of my thoughts right now, preliminary thoughts is that right now with that surplus is we could do, minus a couple of the new positions, reclassifications, do those. I actually the one I went from instead of double time on that special police is going time and a half. Just because I think that's a big up. So, that was like 128 instead of 135 or something. So, I think it took 5,000 off of that. Any full-time reductions or unfilling of positions, I don't have a problem with the school at 3% and there's another position or two but also the discussion we had was increasing receipts and you said that we could probably easily increase by 200,000. Kind of putting my numbers together it'll still put us in that surplus of like 250. And going back to this, there's one thing I didn't say is because I think that we do not need to increase the deductibles at this time because I think what it does, as you know the discussions have been finance, our Board and everything is that it gives us that extra lever down the road because right now by looking at the budget we're putting in 500,000 into, it's for insurance stabilization fund. If we were to do a 2k, 4k right now we're talking a savings of a million dollars. So, theoretically zero if we did 2k, 4k, we're at about 1.5 million really that we can use in case we have another budget crunch which is the chances are as the insurance is gonna go up again. But that gives us the opportunity to go 1, 2, 1 and a half, 3, 2, 4 on those deductibles. I mean, we could still put em in but I think that we have those at least to use down the road instead of putting all the eggs in, using them all now. By doing that also what that does that also gets us to a point that we're tightening the budget and we're looking into the future. So, that was kind of my thought with that. I think also if we did a reclassification that for that dispatch supervisor which is actually kind of short money in that reclassification that actually and I don't know the procedural role with it but it actually now takes a sergeant off of supervision of dispatch. So, I don't know how that works for the police department, but it would seem and I could be wrong, but it looks like that it could possibly help with their admin and oversight of patrol. Also, last thing is there is a very good possibility of a regional dispatch with a couple other small communities that we could generate more revenue. I just think that again, I go back to the fact that we're in a better place right now and it took a while to get there. We found our way there but the deductibles I think we can hold onto and I think there's a few other things in the numbers that I was looking at cause again I don't want to say where I would want reductions or anything like that is that that surplus puts this around 250 and that's not even touching. I'd like to be able to save some things back instead of sitting there and saying hey let's push this through and have a surplus of 600,000.

Mr. Silva: Yeah, well we're gonna be looking at the budget a little more closely.

Mr. Rosenblum: But those are just things that I'm thinking about is because I think that we can still to your point is that I agree with the schools at three. I think that we can do the reclassifications and new positions minus a couple of them and some other things there and if increasing the receipts.

Mr. Silva: Yeah, but I also want to caution that we don't wanna move forward and do these things cause we don't know what's gonna happen the following year. Are we gonna be in the actual position that we were before and stay there. So, it's nice to have cushions even if you don't go to the full levy, you certainly can leave a surplus there because then that surplus there you can get that year that you have a problem.

Mr. Rosenblum: I'm not saying do it now. Right. What would be the percentage of free cash used?

Mr. Strange: What do you mean?

Mr. Rosenblum: Well, generally I've got it down that we've generally spent in the neighborhood through time, like 77%, 6 70. The last year the free cash expenditure was like 43%. But what I'm saying is that we're building up the free cash that we can use some of these stabilization funds but again we're not using it to balance the budget. So, these are just ideas right now, but it still gives us a surplus at 250. If you're looking for a surplus of 1.5 million or something.

Mr. Silva: Beautiful. Taxpayers will love us.

Mr. Rosenblum: Then it's cash that sits in free cash and we put it in the stabilization or something anyways.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, I think we gotta be careful with the word surplus because that's implying we're taking in more money than we need. It's not a surplus, it's not sitting, it's not hoarding cash, it's not sitting on extra cash, it's the amount we're below the levy limit meaning there's tax relief. Not that your bill won't go down but that it's not gonna increase at the pace that it would if we taxed up to two and a half. So, I think surplus is the wrong word to be using. On receipts, I think this is where Mr. Silva was going. I would have great caution on increasing the receipt assumption because you're losing some of your cushion, right? You're almost hedging against yourself. If there's no need to do that which there isn't if we're below levy capacity, I don't see any need to touch that. I guess Marc, you're looking for opinions, right? So, top down if we're starting at 222 below I would still wanna see again me as a person the softest impact on the deductible. I think the burden that the town is shouldering from health insurance exceeds comparisons in towns around us. We know that. And this allows us to make some movement while still leaving this opportunity in outward years. By going just up one tier it's a $400,000 savings and still leaves six, 700k based off this year's numbers in outward years, right? If I'm talking priorities, I think getting the school which seems manageable up to 3% priority, if I'm talking priorities in terms of new positions if available, if room, I think the recreation director should be a priority. The state of our parks and how things are run is atrocious and I think that's a good way to consolidate and get things moving in the right direction. I also think I know we've had discussions about the fire department. The request came in for two out of the revolving or revenue whatever fund, ambulance revenue fund. Personally, I'd rather see that within the budget rather than relying on a separate fund for it. If we're increasing costs, I think we should do it within the budget. And I think it would be prudent to do one at a time, grow in moderation, grow sustainably, check and adjust after one year adding one fire. So, I would be all for, again, if we can fit it, one firefighter, recreation director, the rest of the reclasses I almost see those as a day two item where we see where we fall at the end of everything else, the bigger changes that we make and take a look at those. I guess one question on that front. So, some of these, and I made the comment last time, sizeable increases in some of these steps like 10% double digit percentages. Is that because these folks have not seen an increase in years? Or have they been getting standard cost of living adjustments every year?

Mr. Strange: Are you talking about the reclassifications?

Mr. Alves: Yes. Well, I guess the two you've highlighted in red would not be considered, right? I think those were there. So, I guess it almost becomes mood at that point because we're not, your position now is not to move on those two.

Mr. Strange: Yeah.

Mr. Alves: Okay. I think those were the two.

Mr. Strange: Oh, okay. And the LCTV manager salary comes out of a different ...

Mr. Alves: Right. And that's 800 bucks within his own funds. That's a no brainer. So, I guess for future, right, those two in the red my question would be right they're seeing double digit percentage increases. Is that almost to make up for lost increases or have they been seeing cola's year after year?

Mr. Strange: No, I think for accounting it's the upgrade from L3 to L4.

Mr. Alves: It's like jumping a level. You're gonna see that when you jump the level.

Mr. Strange: Right.

Mr. Alves: So, how many steps remain on the tier that they're on?

Mr. Strange: I think there's five steps left.

Mr. Alves: Okay. Well, if we're not considering that now that's out of there. What did I not touch on? I mean again, the numbers change. I'll emphasize the numbers change constantly. I mean we got these numbers, what, six hours ago? So, I'm still trying to digest it, but with where we're at if we make the adjustment to health savings even if we did include all these reclasses and got the schools to three, added a firefighter through the budget you'd still be looking somewhere in the range from the numbers we have now I'm emphasizing that again, about a quarter million dollars. I think I'm done.

Mr. Gennette: Yes. Marc, what is the dollar value of going up on the deductible to 1k, 2k?

Mr. Strange: 397,000

Mr. Gennette: And what is the increase from the school from two and a half to three?

Mr. Strange: 190

Mr. Gennette: What is it from two? So, that's what, 380 if we

Mr. Strange: Yeah. Every points about 380,000 and they're at two and a half right now so bumping up to three would be another 190,000.

Mr. Gennette: So, a couple of things. First off, I talked about resilience the other day and we don't know what we're gonna walk into with insurances next year. We don't know what we're gonna get hit and actually I was happy to see Chad here because finance committees talking about doing a fund to stave off any future so that we can kind of pad for insurance which I think is a great idea. I'm thinking about employees here going from 500 to 100 and it's very comparable in a school going from two to three. So, it's a wash rate there. So, if you're gonna keep your deductibles down at 500, which I would love to see for the employees to keep that way. But if we're gonna go up, why would we go from the school two to three? They haven't even agreed to that. They were expecting two, we were gonna give them two and a half and now we're gonna give them three. Now I don't mind giving the school money. That's not what I'm saying but we're taken from one to do it for another. We're taking from the employees to give to the school. So, if that's the reasoning, I'm fine with that. But that doesn't help us be more resilient into the next year. That 370k local aid, is that included with the 222 under budget?

Mr. Strange: Yeah.

Mr. Gennette: So, it's not gonna go to 592 under budget? So, the local aid isn't gonna send us up?

Mr. Strange: No. So, that 222 in the green includes the $370,000.

Mr. Gennette: So, it's already there. So, the local receipts, now I know Anthony's against local receipts, Bill's for it. Now I only have one clarifying question as far as that goes. Are we conservative on our local receipts?

Mr. Strange: Yeah.

Mr. Gennette: Are we so conservative that we're gonna just be better budgeting our receipts if we go to 200?

Mr. Strange: The reason I think that certainly we're in a good shape with our reserves is we have been very conservative. We're adding a couple hundred thousand dollars through the MMWEC Pilot Amendment. So, we could increase the receipts by 200,000. Essentially again you're sort of mitigating what that free cash number is gonna be afterwards.

Mr. Gennette: So, there's justification to be able to move those receipts up 200,000 safely?

Mr. Strange: I would say yes.

Mr. Gennette: Okay. Alright. Cause we're really, we're talking about budget here and if we can get more in line with the budget and be a little less conservative than that would probably be for me, I like doing that upfront because on the backside if we came in short on our budget, we're only taxing our free cash. So, if we only got 3 million back instead of 4 million in free cash, we didn't come in on our budget, we just didn't get as much free cash back. Especially with everything that's going on. So, how do we do this and pick up those other positions? How do we do that? The DPW took 0% increase last year. Right? So, they have contractual obligations. What are they slated for this year? For an increase.

Mr. Rosenblum: Zero.

Mr. Strange: Like their departmental increase? Yeah, it's very, very small.

Mr. Gennette: It's very small. So, they took nothing last year and we're gonna shortchange them this year, right? They've had a position open that they have not been able to fill, but we're just gonna go ahead and give the school 380,000. I'm sure the DPW would love that extra percentage if we're just throwing things around because we're giving gift money, you know, we told the school two, two and a half and I'm not trying to hog tie the school I'm really not but if you're gonna go up from 500 to 1k in the deductibles and it's going to affect all the employees why would be hog tie DPW?

Mr. Alves: DPW's getting 3.7% by the way.

Mr. Gennette: 3.7%.

Mr. Strange: And Mr. Chairman, that was the DPW's requested budget. There were no cuts to that. So, that was what they requested.

Mr. Gennette: The 3.7?

Mr. Strange: Yeah.

Mr. Gennette: Oh, I thought they were okay.

Mr. Strange: We didn't cut them at all. In terms of the deductible increase, it's not a straight cause not every employee reaches the total deductible. In fact, a lot of them don't. So, if you're a single, you probably are not gonna reach the deductible. I know in speaking with Carrie and some other folks with families they're also not reaching that maximum deductible right now at 500 or a thousand. So, it's not like a dollar for dollar increase because you may or may not feel the pain of that increase from 500 to 1000 or 1000 to 2000. The other thing is by state late we have to share some of those savings. So, our offer would be to bridge that gap for fiscal 27 using free cash. It's in our free cash calculations right now. So, for fiscal 27, the employees would not feel any pain, any of the difference in that increase. Right? We would see the benefit in the operating budget, but we would pay for some of it on the back end using free cash. My last point is the schools in their presentation I think they presented a 2% increase, and their deficit was a million dollars. So, that's not gonna get them to where they need to be to balance but it would certainly help. And we typically try to get the schools at 3%. I don't know if you have any response to that.

Mr. Gennette: So that's fine. So, we're talking 222, that's going up on the deductible, 1k, 2k. That's going up on the school 3%. So, that's pretty much a wash.

Mr. Strange: So, that 222 doesn't include any of the bullet points so the starting point is 222 in the green and then how do we want to treat the deductible, the new positions, the FTE reductions, the school budget. Trying to get an idea from all of you like where you are on it.

Mr. Gennette: Right, I get that but we're sitting at 222 right now. Before you go up on the deductible and before you take that basically you're gonna turn around 397 is what the deductibles gonna be, right? If we see that improvement, you're gonna turn around and you're gonna up the school 380.

Mr. Alves: No because the two and a half is already computed in there.

Mr. Gennette: Oh, two and a half is already computed in there.

Mr. Alves: You're gonna still gain almost 200k.

Mr. Gennette: So, it's 190k. So, you're still getting the 200k. It is possible to better budget with the local receipts and get another 200. So, what did that end up?

Mr. Strange: You know it's hard to come up with a figure because everybody has different opinions. These are just sort of the tools that we have and it's just a matter of what the priorities of the Board are. But yeah, all these are tools and that we have at our disposal. It's just a matter of how do you, do you want to push the schools up to 3%? Do you wanna award the new positions and reclassifications, what do you want to do about the FTEs? Do we want to keep the deductible at the same for the employees? Do we want to nudge it up? I think the discussions been great. There are valid points. Everybody's making valid points. So, this is helpful. But in terms of totaling it up there's too many moving pieces right now.

Mr. Gennette: Well, at the end of the day, much like Manny alluded to we're playing with taxpayers' money and if there's an opportunity to make it a little easier on people this year it would certainly be a nice thing to do cause we've been hitting them hard year over year over year. So, if we could give them a brief reprieve. I know 220k is not gonna go a long way in people's taxes. They're not even gonna feel that. But I don't want to not do things that we need to do this year and then have to fill that gap that we created because we didn't get the revenue next year. So, I'm kind of between two worlds here.

Mr. Strange: Yeah, no, these are tough decisions to make. No questions about it.

Mr. Silva: I'm going onto the taxpayer side. We have increased trash and that's $750,000 and that's where these revenues are coming from. And I don't think we're paying enough attention to what's happening to the taxpayers. The increases have been tremendous and this year some of them are really, really, high. And I know some of them are high and that's because of the way the assessments went up and whatnot. But we need to focus on tightening our belts. Let's not just go forward with some of these things and use up the money. Let's reserve our monies for future. We don't know what's gonna happen. And if we think that we can continuously get our revenues from the taxpayer it's not gonna happen. I feel for them, I'm sorry, and the things we have to do we have to do. We gotta run the town properly and I'm all for taking care of our employees because as we all know we're always short. But I wanna see us do the things that we can do like the insurances, and we haven't touched on moving forward with getting our insurance percentages up. Hopefully we still got that in our minds that we're gonna go to 25, right?

Mr. Strange: Yeah. We gotta negotiate that. Yeah.

Mr. Silva: We got to negotiate obviously but we have to focus on getting that done. We have to focus on keeping tax rates down. I'm always on that side and we were considering going to 275 for the trash. And again I still think that that's an unfair fee because it's only for the certain fuel that increase those taxes. I personally I would rather see us cut, save, save, and reduce the trash fee next year back to a hundred. Say look at folks you gave us that money

of a repeat for this year now we should give em back. I mean I'm not for spending money right now this day and age. Unfortunately, I'm not. If we have to we have to but.

Mr. Rosenblum: Can we do a trash statement?

Mr. Alves: So, the fees not increasing under this, is that what you're saying?

Mr. Silva: No, no but we were going to previous to that.

Mr. Alves: That was under consideration. Okay. I misheard you.

Mr. Silva: No, no, no. That was a suggestion but here we go. We would've gone right back and gotten money from the residents with trash and I hate that fee. Mr. Gennette does too. Just terrible thing that we do quite honestly. But we had to do it. I understand we have to do it; we have to do it. But let's not get carried away with the money that we have. Like Anthony says, it's not surplus. It sits there. Doesn't mean that we have to go to full levy. If we don't go to full levy, so be it.

Mr. Alves: That gives us extra room outward years.

Mr. Gennette: So, that right there, that was kind of where I was headed. That extra room right there should provide resilience because we don't know what's gonna happen with the insurance next year. I don't want to do crazy things this year and then turn around, and we do have a 12% increase next year and we didn't do any planning for it. So, I mean, we have the ability to kind of organize here. We're talking about instead of where are we gonna get it we're talking about where are we gonna spend it? Well, we could spend it everywhere. Everybody could use it. Every department can use it but we have to plan for insurance next year.

Mr. Strange: Well, Mr. Chairman, so, most of these are cost savings measures, right? The only additional expenditures are increase in the school budget and then the new positions and reclassifications, the employee deductible, the cutting FTEs, those are cost saving measures. So, I'm just trying to get some clarification cause I hear both you Mr. Chairman and James kind of talking about the same things but it sounds like you would like to maximize our savings this year and potentially if we can lower the trash fee. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Gennette: That's what Manny said.

Mr. Silva: That's what I said. I would like to see that or not necessarily lower the trash fee but have a nice cushion between the full levy and leaving I don't know if you leave, I believe it's every hundred thousand dollars saves a nickel on the tax rate. So, they would actually get it back that way. Residents do need a break on.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, I know I led with some priorities, right. Increasing the school to three, priority of positions like recreation director. I know Mr. Rosenblum and I have talked about it. I don't wanna put words in his mouth. I hate to assume, I would assume he is in favor of that but.

Mr. Rosenblum: Yeah. I think to be honest with you with the recreation director I think it should be more responsibility.

Mr. Alves: So, more for perception, right? Because we've been saying spending money, don't spend money as soon as we have it. I just want to say that the plan that I loosely outlined based on these numbers gives us more levy capacity than we're at right now.

Mr. Silva: And I wanna go along with you that while I'm saying let's save money, let's not do this, I absolutely, I'm on board with you with our recreation is atrocious. I've been saying that since I got here day one. Our parks are everything is just terrible. We should have some kind of a fund and recreation director obviously we have to do something with it and that's to me is a priority. So, I'm not saying that everything.

Mr. Alves: It's been a priority for me for a long time and Mr. Rosenblum has been very helpful in that endeavor as well. And I think whether it's 200, 300 whatever the excess capacity is there's no use of free cash, the trash fees stagnant. It remains the same. And when's the last time that we haven't taxed to the levy or haven't used free cash in the budget?

Mr. Strange: Well, we used free cash last two years.

Mr. Alves: Right. And I don't wanna keep beat a dead horse but I really, really caution the increase of receipts until we have a history of realization that those receipts in fact are gonna be there. Because if things go south, right, what I led in with, right? You wanna start conservatively rather than pie in the sky and then, oh crap, that's all.

Mr. Silva: And quite honestly, I don't wanna be in a position that we were in last year and this year, although it's changed significantly but I don't wanna be in that position again. We should have cushions where we don't get into those positions.

Mr. Alves: So, we leave cushion with deductible increases. We leave the cushion with the receipts. Cushion with the tax levy. That's 2, 2, 2. It's almost a million dollars cushion. Again, not money we're sitting on, excess capacity.

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, if I may, so, we've heard from Bill and Anthony about the deductibles, do you or James have any opinions on whether we should stay where we are or we should bump it?

Mr. Silva: I think we should bump it only because insurance is such influx right now. And if we start now doing certain things we won't have to do a big hurdle or big jump later on. I think we should do it and get our ducks in a row quite honestly.

Mr. Strange: And raising the deductible does mitigate against future increases.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's what I'm saying is if you do it now and we can play with the numbers and the FTEs and everything that we're still gonna be in that 2, 250 or whatever excess capacity is that if we use it now when we don't need to, to be honest. And then now we've taken a piece of the pie out that if we get hit with 12 or 14 to where now, like I'm saying is that if we don't use it right now, we're saying if we went to 2 or 4 it's a million dollars in savings. And then we're also putting five, most likely putting 500,000 into an insurance stabilization fund. Now we're looking at potentially 1.5, you know what I'm saying? So, if we take a big hit because originally when we were looking at these insurance numbers it was 1.5 to $2 million hit. When we were saying 18 and now, we're at 7.5 that 18 was looking at two, two and a half. So, now we still have that but if we use it now and we don't necessarily need it that's the only thing I'm saying is it's again as the saying is it's that you've got three levers there, we're pulling one, so we don't have that lever anymore.

Mr. Silva: Right and I will say that I've been here several years and insurance we've dealt with each and every year. I will say that when it happened last year that kind of thing I always said it can't possibly be going up that much this year. But it's also not gonna happen, I don't think at 7.5% because that is very, very low.

Mr. Gennette: It's a horrible rate. It's better than 18 but it's still a horrible rate.

Mr. Rosenblum: But what they've done is they expended the GLP-1s which has been the big kicker on this whole thing. It'll still be able to use for a diabetic I think but that's what's gonna happen is it's like saying we take the hit now we got the big break now we might not get it next year. That's why I'm saying hold the lever now. It's a discussion we're not at that point yet anyways but I think that those ideas are out there now.

Mr. Strange: Mr. Chairman, it's just helpful not to put anybody on the spot but it's helpful to hear what the opinions are so we can formulate what the budget's gonna look like.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Rosenblum, so, I get what you're saying I just wanna highlight if we wanna move forward with some of those expenditures I think that one tiers needed to move up because that's the biggest cost saver left, you know what I'm saying?

Mr. Rosenblum: Right. But what I'm saying is like you're saying too and Mr. Silva's saying is that we're gonna see numbers move still a little bit. And we still have, there's something in here that we've discussed a little bit but we don't want to talk about in public right now is that there is another option in there that could save us in the neighborhood of 250 to $300,000 if we choose.

Mr. Strange: It is a good point though, Anthony, because that deductible increase does open the door for the new positions and the school budget increase.

Mr. Alves: How many employees do we have in town?

Mr. Strange: We have about 225 on the town side and like 520 on the school side.

Mr. Alves: 800. I mean, if a deductible increase going up $500 is gonna help out 20,000 people and save us 400 grand.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. I mean, I don't, I don't. We have a lot less subscribers obviously.

Mr. Gennette: So, I'm for increasing the deductible 500 to one. I'm all for increasing that deductible from 500 to one. I never like the idea of going to two but at least that provides some gravity towards taking care of the insurance. So, some of the things that we've done that have to cover the insurance we've done. I appreciate that. And if it starts to come in down the line and we, I would rather do a slow increase on employees than just go from 500 to two or whatever. That's a big change. And you could say that doesn't affect everybody, but I know people with kids who have disabilities and they pay for expensive medications and they go to the pharmacy and it wasn't $300 last time it was $500 and they went what the hell happened? And they took that hit immediately. So, there's a big deal there. So, I'm fine with that but we have to create some insurance stability because we cannot handle the volatility coming in from the insurance. We cannot do it.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman, one more thing. You could put schools at 2.75 and it almost funds another position. Still it's going up. That's another option is cause you're just moving the numbers. You're going 190 now, it's 95. So, you've got 95 grand there that could move because originally, I know that they were budgeting two they didn't want to go to two the original was 2.5. If we can get them up to 2.75 or if we can get them to three but I'm just saying that's another piece to move where now you could be taking care of the rec director.

Mr. Gennette: I'm not opposed to positions. I'm really not. But we're really not out of the volatility wood yet. I mean do we make moves now because we have some movement to be able to move maybe but I just really caution, we've talked about the reclassifications of the ones that came through which I think really wasn't all that much money before.

Mr. Strange: It's like 60 grand.

Mr. Gennette: It was like eight positions or something. Right. It wasn't even that much. Okay, I see that. That's a little on the chart goes a long way. But rec director, dispatch supervisor, I just caution moving into these areas without having the good plan for it. And do I think they need it, absolutely. I think they're a great idea.

Mr. Rosenblum: The dispatch supervisor is only a reclass. It's only like a 3250.

Mr. Gennette: Oh, that's part of the reclassifications, right?

Mr. Rosenblum: Yeah. It's only a 3,250. It's a 25% increase in the rate I think the hourly rate. But what it does is it and it was actually a good idea I think Chief Brennan instead of requesting a new position did a reclass. So, it would be someone from within, and I think we know who would probably be moved into that position too. But yeah, that's like $3,250.

Mr. Gennette: Does this 222 exclude the positions for the police department that are going to be retiring?

Mr. Strange: It includes those salaries.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, that's why I'm saying is that that's another thing is that we talked about it once before is if you don't if you fill 1, 2, 3, 0 you're talking about 280 if you didn't fill any of them. It's not that you're getting rid of anybody, you're just not filling the retirements.

Mr. Gennette: No, I get it. I get it. And I don't have a problem with downsizing and stuff like that but you're basically turning your three vacant police positions and you're turning it into a rec director. That's basically what you're doing.

Mr. Rosenblum: The rec director. No.

Mr. Gennette: Yeah. So, you're basically your levy limit you have 222k right? And those are coming off of the back of three positions that are not being filled from the police department.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, that numbers not even included.

Mr. Alves: Woah, woah, woah, woah. That's not true at all. Where did that come from?

Mr. Gennette: I just asked them.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, no, no. The 222 does not have less the 280 or whatever the number is for three retirements. That includes those three positions.

Mr. Gennette: So, if we filled those positions. Oh, that's a different ball game.

Mr. Silva: If we don't then we'd be at five something.

Mr. Gennette: Well, that's what I'm saying. I didn't know if this was hinged on not filling those positions that we're sitting at.

Mr. Silva: I was looking at the numbers for the police, and we are staffed pretty well from what I see as far as the other communities. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe there's something that I'm missing with the other communities, but we are staffed pretty well.

Mr. Rosenblum: There's many people that would tell you that we're way understaffed too. But if they see the numbers, I get it but also in the same sense and I'm not putting words in anybody's mouth cause I respect him so much is that Chief Brennan actually said that he's good where he is at right now. He feels that way, then again, he also knows the writing on the wall and the budget, and he knows what's being said. But in the same sense if you make it work and we can keep two or all three or one or zero whatever, again, the numbers are moving. So, again we've gone from 2.7 in the hole to an excess levy of 222.

Mr. Gennette: How much are we talking for a rec director benefited?

Mr. Rosenblum: In there it was 62 plus 25.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. I think it was 87 all in.

Mr. Rosenblum: And to tell you the truth, because I've talked to you about it, I think that's actually too little because I think there should be more responsibility with that position.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. Again, it could be another change coming down the road.

Mr. Gennette: So, anyways, I guess my point is that as long as we can create resilience for the insurance, I'll probably be fine. But we have to establish that.

Mr. Rosenblum: We'll be back at it.

Mr. Gennette: Did Mr. Mullin have anything that he wanted to ask.

Mr. Mullin: Oh, actually if I could. Chad Mullin from the Finance Committee. So, just great discussion. Thanks. This will certainly serve us well for tomorrow night's Finance Committee

Meeting. So, just before we move away from that, some direction on the schools, are we staying at the 2.5 or are you considering looking at 2.75 or 3?

Mr. Silva: It'll be considered. I believe that's what we discussed. All of this stuff we discussed will be considered a little later.

Mr. Rosenblum: I mean, I'm not gonna speak for them but I think we're fine at the 2.5 because that's what's actually in the budget, right?

Mr. Alves: I'd like to see 3, I'll tell you, I'd like to see 3.

Mr. Rosenblum: And I don't have a problem with three either or that's again moving parts. But right now in this number at the 222 it's at 2.5.

Mr. Gennette: I'd like to see 2.5.

Mr. Mullin: Sorry, and I know that there's discussion about rec director back and forth and I just overall new position requests where are those? Where do those fall in here?

Mr. Gennette: So, I think rec director is really the only new position that's available. I think the other ones are reclassifications that are coming.

Mr. Alves: Or firefighter.

Mr. Rosenblum: Libraries is to backfill a position that actually kind of left because they're.

Mr. Mullin: So, that's not a new position, that's a replacement.

Mr. Rosenblum: It's a replacement but I think a little bit more money just because it's taken on more responsibility. I think the two firefighters but that's 150 plus the benefits but that would be taken care of out of their revenue.

Mr. Gennette: And I agree with Anthony on that. I think we gotta stop.

Mr. Alves: I'd rather have it the other way but.

Mr. Gennette: I would too.

Mr. Silva: On a budget?

Mr. Gennette: Take it out of the ambulance subscription fund. I don't think that's a good funding model for wages.

Mr. Silva: And then where's the money that he was gonna use? Just stay there?

Mr. Gennette: No, it's gotta come out of his budget.

Mr. Alves: He'd increase the budget for the position.

Mr. Rosenblum: When you think about it, we are funding it through the budget because any excess revenues that he has at the end of the year goes back into free cash.

NEW BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign minutes from Select Board Meeting of January 20, 2026.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign minutes from Select Board Meeting of January 20, 2026, with all members present. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to appoint Cheryl Allen as the Finance Director.

Mr. Rosenblum: It all passed the Attorney General. We had to wait and it was 90 days. So, this is the position that was approved at and it's in the budget. No.

Mr. Strange: We're gonna have to tweak the budget just a little bit.

Mr. Rosenblum: Well, the Treasury Collector one was different. That's what I was thinking.

Mr. Gennette: Well, part of my reason is we talk about budgets a lot and I honestly don't even know Cheryl. I think if I passed her in the hall once I'd be amazed. We used to see Kim Collins every time there was a budget meeting. We would see the and I don't know if that's a management preference of yours or if it's that she's not able to make it or whatever. But that kinda weighs on me when we start talking about a Finance Director. Is she gonna be here?

Mr. Rosenblum: Fair enough.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. We definitely we have a new position, a bigger position obviously. We have to set expectations. Sit down and talk to her. We definitely want to see how the year goes and make adjustments at that point. Cheryl's a Town Account. I wasn't here obviously but I think Kim was a little bit more intimately involved in the budget. I like being the point person for the budget. I like knowing where we are. I would like to, once assuming Cheryl gets appointed as the Finance Director, incorporate her more so it's not all on me. So, we're more of a 50/50. So, our eyes on the stuff like the MUNIS snafu and stuff like that. But I think I'll always be involved in the budget.

Mr. Silva: Yeah. To go along with that and the reason Kim was here a lot is because she was the one that was actually presenting the forms, giving us the budget. She was the one to actually do it. Now, Marc is doing it. That's why you don't see her as much.

Mr. Gennette: Well, I know but she's the Town Accountant though. I mean when you go to the school and they start talking money you're talking to Mickey. Mickey answers those questions. And the reason is because he's the accountant, right? I mean we ask you questions and no offense but a lot of times you go I don't know cause you have to go back to her. So, now there's a whole delay in the response here. And just part of my issue is that I know she does a lot of remote work and I know she doesn't live locally and I'm not trying to be a pain in the ass for that, but we have a problem in our treasurers in our tax collection office. And we need somebody that is going to be hands on down there. You can't be down there like that. Is she gonna be able to do that? We can set expectations all we want but I just don't wanna have to fire somebody again because they didn't meet those expectations. I would rather just talk about to somebody that can fill that position properly. I just don't know if I'm ready to make the decision on this today. What does this do to you? If I try to tank this tonight, what does that do to you? Does it hurt you?

Mr. Strange: It doesn't really do anything to me. The Finance Department's been created. The position's been created. Cheryl's the only candidate. She's the only candidate. There'll certainly be a management component to that, right. So, Cheryl's remote Wednesday and Fridays. That certainly it makes it a little bit more difficult. No question about it but these are all things that we'll have to discuss and work out. Cheryl is gonna hold everybody accountable. She's by the book. She's very smart. She's hardworking.

Mr. Gennette: Okay, so I just wanna go on record that my points have been noted.

Mr. Silva: Noted.

Mr. Alves: My question is, I guess to you, this isn't new though. We've been talking about this since October.

Mr. Silva: Yeah, no, we brought it to Town Meeting.

Mr. Gennette: I know.

Mr. Alves: And it was known at that time what the path was.

Mr. Gennette: I'm not opposed to the position. I'm opposed that we have not seen Cheryl really don't know Cheryl and we're putting her in this position that's all.

Mr. Alves: No, but that's what I'm saying. We knew in October, essentially Marc had proposed Cheryl for this position. So, why didn't we raise concerns then?

Mr. Gennette: Well, then make your motion.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to appoint Cheryl Allen as Finance Director. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to accept the FY2026 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Award from PVPC in the amount of $15,000.

Mr. Alves: I have a question. So, did this help pay for I forgot the gentleman's name that was with the Planning Board. Like in the interim? Or I guess what does this help with?

Mr. Strange: Ken. This is separate. So, DLTA stands for District Local Technical Assistance. So, every year the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has a bucket of money that they can award to communities for special projects. So, actually, Josh and I met and we talked about a bunch of different possibilities. And I think Josh's consultation with Ken they wanted to look at something that might expand our housing stock. So, that's what the Ludlow Future Growth is.

Mr. Alves: So, this is like a credit from PVPC for their services?

Mr. Strange: Pretty much. It's like let's say they have $500,000 for this program. They'll allocate 15,000 and then pay themselves.

Mr. Alves: Got it. Thank you.

Motion made by Mr. Gennette to accept the FY2026 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Award from PVPC in the amount of $15,000. **Mr. Rosenblum second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve and sign corrected Common Victualler License for USave Food Store, LLC.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman, just for clarification this was originally listed with the wrong manager so we're correcting it right now.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign corrected Common Victualler License for USave Food Store, LLC. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly vote to authorize the Town Administrator to appoint non-department head employees with the Select Board's jurisdiction.

Mr. Strange: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, so, if you remember earlier in the year, we had asked Town Council about, I think it started with seeing if the police chief and the fire chief could appoint their subordinate employees. And in the course of that research the Town Council came back and said not only can the chiefs not appoint their subordinate employees that the Select Board is in fact the appointing authority for every employee underneath the Select Board's umbrella. Which means that now any employee and including the van driver and some admins have to come in and be appointed by the Select Board. So, the discussion was, oh let's look at this and for Town Meeting let's submit a bylaw amendment that would allow the Town Administrator to appoint non department heads just to expedite the process, make it simple, and make it less painful for employees that probably aren't gonna be public facing. So, when I went into the bylaw that would've changed it we realized that there's some language in there that allows the Select Board to essentially vote to give the Town Administrator responsibility. So, the thought was instead of creating a bylaw amendment, sending it to Town Meeting, waiting for the AG review, the whole thing, is just to have the Board vote to give the Town Administrator the authority to appoint non department heads. Just basically expediting the process.

Mr. Silva: If you recall quite a while ago, I mentioned that I don't understand why the Selectmen are not appointing some of these people. And it was just like we're moving forward and from where I come it was always the Selectmen have to appoint or hire and all, so that's a good thing. But the question I have for you, when you do this, are you going to come forward with this and let us know? At least let us know that.

Mr. Strange: We can do whatever.

Mr. Silva: It'd be nice to at least let us know, hey gonna be appointing this person or whichever way.

Mr. Strange: So, I can certainly put it in my report. We don't do a lot of hires. But I can certainly put that in my report. I would say as an amendment to what I wrote as a proposed motion is if the Board wants to continue to appoint police officers and fire chief promotions like you've been doing here tonight as an example, I don't need to do that. I think that process is working. If you guys want to sort of step away from that I'm happy to step into the chair but that's one amendment I might make if you're so inclined to vote.

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, does this also authorize you to move people at will?

Mr. Strange: To move people?

Mr. Gennette: Yeah. So, if you wanted one person in one department to go to a different department you could move them.

Mr. Strange: I already had that authority. It so rarely happens because people have certain expertise's in their but let's say there's a FTE reduction and that creates a vacancy in a department. We could subject to union negotiations we could make that move.

Mr. Silva: But to go along with that usually the positions open usually they apply for it anyways.

Mr. Strange: Typically, right unless we're in a budget crunch and we gotta lay people off.

Mr. Rosenblum: So, you're saying police and fire. Well, you said except department heads. So, that includes police chief. Is police and fire appointments and. No that's the police chief and the fire chief for department heads. It would just say police and fire appointments and.

Mr. Strange: Except department heads and police and fire appointments. Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Rosenblum: Yeah. And going from a sergeant to a lieutenant. Promotions. Thank you.

Mr. Gennette: Well, there's a motion right here already.

Mr. Rosenblum: No, I know. I'm looking at it right here. But he was adding to it with the police and fire appointments and promotions.

Mr. Alves: Mr. Chairman, I'm confused by the wording. I think you confused me. Department heads, I get. Police and fire new hires, they're already going through the chiefs. Are they not? I thought we already made that change with new hires.

Mr. Strange: No. The new hires will be a recommendation from the police chief. But you are still the appointing.

Mr. Alves: Sorry. Right. That's what we changed. They came up with the recommendation. We still appointed. And then I had asked you the question this week, why aren't we doing that with the promotions? Cause I mean ideally, I'd prefer that too even with the promotions.

Mr. Silva: We always have and somehow things got all changed.

Mr. Strange: So, I did ask that question and sorry I didn't get back to you on it. So, the reason for that is that there's no internal process for promotions.

Mr. Alves: I think you gave me that answer a long time ago.

Mr. Strange: And maybe Chief Brennan is interested in changing the process but as it stands this is the process. They take the three names from the list, they interview, you guys interview them and then.

Mr. Alves: Okay. I think that's a long-winded way of getting at. I just wanna make sure that doesn't touch what we changed with the new hires of the police and fire. Basically, just come in with a recommendation.

Mr. Strange: This wouldn't, the Town Administrator would not be able to appoint anybody from the police or the fire. It's really just for town hall.

Mr. Alves: Nonsupervisory town hall roles. How would that work for example, I don't know if it was last meeting or two meetings ago, we had a lady for the Senior Center. So, would that recommendation come from Jody to you? Kind of like what we're doing with new police and fire hires. It would come from Jody to you and then you'd be the.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. So, she was obviously the preferred candidate. It's really Jody's decision, right? So, Jody says this is the person I want to hire. We'd write a letter with the appointment and then we can share the letter. We can put it into a report.

Mr. Alves: Just instead of them coming here, you would do that.

Mr. Strange: Right. So, essentially two weeks before they'd have an offer of employment and not have to come in front of the Board.

Mr. Alves: I guess I would pose it the way, has anyone ever said no when it's a situation like that? It's almost ceremonial, right? I guess that's my way of saying I don't see an issue. If you guys have an issue, please bring it to light cause I'm not thinking of it.

Mr. Strange: And just to be fair Mr. Chairman, that's the way it was for a very long time and just recently after we asked Town Council this question it changed because now, we knew what the law said. So, we had to follow it.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to vote to authorize the Town Administrator on behalf of the Select Board to appoint all employees except department heads, Police and Fire appointments and promotions who perform their duties under the Select Board's authority. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Strange: So, a few things here tonight. As we discussed a little bit previously, the special Town Meeting bylaws were approved by the Attorney General's office. Essentially in any town where Town Meeting approves a new bylaw or bylaw amendment, that those changes have to be reviewed by the Attorney General's office. The AGs office has 90 days to review. They typically approve them. Then there's a public posting period. I think it's 30 days and once that public posting period and review period is over the bylaws are actually enforceable. That time period ends tomorrow, which is part of the reason why we asked the Board to appoint a Finance Director tonight. So, notably a couple of the bylaw changes that were approved by Town Meeting in October was the newly created Unreasonable Noise bylaw and the bylaw creating the Finance Department and Finance Director. Any questions on those on that? No. Moving on, it's grant season and public forums. We got a lot of stuff going on. There's multiple upcoming public meetings, which were on the heels of a public forum that was held on January 29th that Manny attended. Thank you, Manny. Which was hosted by the Planning Board and the Town Planner to discuss potential community development BOT grant projects and solicit feedback on our zoning bylaws that could potentially be improved. Upcoming on February 11th, we have our fiscal year 27 budget, public budget forum which will take place in the LHS auditorium starting at 6:00 p.m. The

following evening, February 12th, there's a public presentation and discussion on the updated housing production plan. Every five years towns have to update their housing production plan and that presentation will be held in the Select Board conference room right in here starting at 7:00 p.m. That's Thursday, February 12th. Also, at the Select Board's meeting on February 17th, which is the next regularly scheduled meeting, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will be holding a public hearing to present and solicit feedback on potential CDBG grant projects. Obviously, grant season is also upon us. We've already applied for the Community Compact IT grant to fund upgrades and improvements to the Town's enterprise resource planning platform, which is MUNIS. This week we also met with Weston and Sampson to discuss planning and design projects for this MVP grant cycle, MVP standing for Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness. So, our MVP grant team includes myself, Josh Carpenter, and Brittany Beaumier. In addition, the municipal ADA grant program opens up in the spring and since we now have an ADA self-evaluation that includes recommended projects for all town and school facilities. We can submit competitive grant applications. In fact Josh Carpenter and I are working on putting together an application to create an ADA accessible path at Whtiney Park that would connect the playground area with the athletic fields and Thompson Pool and lastly, the CDBG grant application as previously discussed. And lastly, wanted to put this out for discussion and for the public's input and the Board's, whenever we put out robocalls, we get all kinds of interest, people requesting to get put on the list, letting us know that their number has changed and they don't want to miss the calls. Obviously, we send out robocalls announcing town meetings, events, alerts, all kinds of things. And this is really the only means of communication that allows us to reach everybody. Not everybody's on Facebook, not everybody's on LCTV, not everybody reads the paper. So, the robocall is really the only thing that really gets to everybody. As we use the program more frequently though we may want to consider creating a policy to define for example, what the process is? Is there an approval process? Do we get multiple eyes on an announcement? Who are the authorized users? Right now, there are several people who have access to the Blackboard and there's really no approval process. So, if you have access to that login, you can essentially go and submit a robocall. Reasons for the calls and frequency and the like. It seems like we're using the robocalls more. They are effective. People seem to be getting some utility out of them. Just feels like maybe we might want to sort of define things a little bit more.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chair, during COVID we did them, we might have done them weekly. That was just because we were giving updates on numbers and things and we kept it going for a little while after that but then it kind of stopped and went by the way.

Mr. Silva: I was the last one to actually do robo for that year and then the Chairman would get on and update the robocall, the numbers and I gotta tell you, I had a lot, a lot of elderly people that would sit by the phone and wait for me. And they've told me that they're waiting and then one of their kids would try to ... and says man I gotta tell you, my mother sits by the phone and says be quiet. I don't want anything. Shut the TV off. Manny's coming on. They enjoy that. So, I think it's a great idea.

Mr. Strange: Good. Anybody else with strong feelings?

Mr. Alves: I'd say, there's gotta be, not saying it's not there now, just a balance between spamming, for lack of better term. Just top of my head, this is not all inclusive, I would think anything safety related. Whether it's, it's the season of parking bans, things like that or something catastrophic. Maybe like when payments are due. Reminders when payments are due. And I'd say any type of public forum, whether it's like a budget forum or I mean, Town Meeting's open to everybody even if you can't vote. But that's just what comes to mind now. That's not an all-inclusive list.

Mr. Strange: I'm sure you guys are very aware, the last robocall that went out about that meeting on Thursday was sent out on the day of the meeting. It should have been sent out the week before. We had a resident come in and she wanted to talk to us about that. She really had a decent idea what to do. One robocall at the end of each month announcing the upcoming events for the following month. Whether it's a concert, whatever it is, sort of cut down on the frequency as you're saying. We're gonna put this on for an agenda item next week. So, I have something a little bit more concrete for you guys to take a look at.

Mr. Alves: I think the only, I'm gonna put a fly on you, the only thing about doing it once a month, you potentially have such a long call. If you're listing everything that's gonna happen in March or February and the call runs three minutes at what point are people tuning out. Or if it's so far in advance that they forget about it.

Mr. Strange: Yeah. It might be an end of the month summary call and anticipation on the next month and then still do the robocalls. Just making them shorter. Again, everything's on the table.

Mr. Rosenblum: Robocalls for when Westover plans detonations.

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.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Mr. Gennette: Mr. Chairman, so, the school superintendent search committee is going very well. We've got our first interviews scheduled. So, we should have a new superintendent soon.

Mr. Alves: How many candidates were there?

Mr. Gennette: We started with 16. It may have gotten higher than that before the end of it. I don't know what the final tally was. There was one more day to go.

Mr. Alves: Do you know how many you're interviewing in total or that. You just have the one that you're starting with?

Mr. Gennette: We have narrowed the field. I can't expand on it because all of that's in executive.

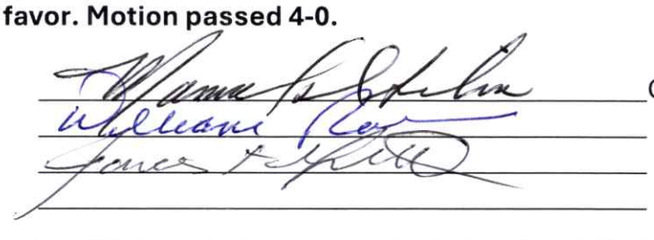
Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman, I don't have any updates or anything, but I would like to say that I'd like to commend the DPW on their cleanup of our streets. I mean the main thorough ways, as I would say, were great. I was out. I went out I think the next morning or whatever and I could easily get to the pike and everything. And obviously you're gonna have some side streets that are gonna be later than sooner, that they get to but also remember that they also contract out a lot of the work too. So, I just wanna commend them on and look at it this way, when's the last time we've had, I think my yard was 22 or 23 inches, when's the last time we've seen snow? A substantial amount. It's gotte be, 10 inches is 10 inches but I mean that much it's been over five or six years for sure.

Mr. Alves: To echo on the DPW, I think during just a normal storm, when you get four or five inches, the amount of work and logistics that go into it is difficult enough. And when you talk about 19, 20, 21 inches, whatever it is, you have to do all that and then figure out where to put the snow. So, thank you to everyone there. I have a friend that plows in another town and just the type of stuff I hear is just. Dodging mailboxes and dodging cars that shouldn't be in the road and all that stuff. So, as an aside between probably the complaints we get on that or just town employees in general I just wanted to take a minute, it's good to show some grace once in a while. Right. Because I'm sure wherever you may work, mistakes happen. Or things probably aren't up to the standard that someone might be arbitrarily setting. And I think the benefit the majority or people have in their line of work is if a mistake happens or something isn't up to someone else's idea of good, maybe your teammate sees it, maybe your boss sees it. 20,000 people don't see it. Our town employees work hard, and I think it's a good idea to keep that in mind, right? Like every move is seen by 20,000 people and there's a lot of moves.

Mr. Silva: I just wanna say that one, there is a survey as Marc mentioned, we had a meeting the other night and it's quite important what they're trying to do with zoning and getting the town involved into a bit of things and certain things that can happen that can actually bring in revenues and whatnot to help the taxpayer base. So, that survey is out there. I believe it's

until the 14th, right? If I'm not mistaken. So, if you have time, just pick it up, write your comments, your things on there and it certainly will help them with the process that they're going through. The other thing that I wanna say is, I would like people to realize or actually take it upon themselves to look at our meeting agenda. Okay. I've had several people question, when did you do that? Why was that done? We didn't even know. It's not our responsibility to, we have what 20,000 I think we're down to actually. We can't notify 20,000 people of what is on our agenda. And we post it downstairs, we post it on tv I believe and we post it on our website. So, take it upon yourself to look at what's coming up and if you have something that you might be interested, certainly come on in. We go through certain things here. Nobody comes in and then out there they. Somebody yelled at me cause we did something or I did something and I said Well, I'm sorry but we posted it. It was on the agenda. You have to be a little more concerned a little more. Not just us, the school committee has also meetings that the people should get involved in and see what's up before them.

Motion made by Mr. Rosenblum to close the Select Board meeting at 8:14 P.M. **Mr. Gennette 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.