



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

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TOWN OF LUDLOW

The Meeting of the Select Board held on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, began at 5:30 p.m. in the Select Board's Conference Room.

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

First order of business: Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Rosenblum: 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

Residents Joe Lemieux of 38 Shawinigan Drive and several neighbors raised concerns about a trailer that was dropped off in the roadway by an individual from Chicopee. Residents reported that the trailer, which they described as containing junk and debris, was initially left in the street without wheels and later moved partially onto a neighboring driveway, causing damage to both the driveway and the roadway. Residents stated that the individual intends to bring additional similar materials onto Lot 12 on Shawinigan Drive, raising concerns about potential unkempt conditions, wildlife attraction, and negative impacts on property values. Photos of the trailer, roadway damage, and the individual's Chicopee property were referenced.

Residents reported that the Ludlow Police Department had already been involved due to the obstruction of the roadway, which they noted is only 18 feet wide and used by school buses. Complaint paperwork was filed earlier in the day. The Board explained that because the matter was raised during public comment and not listed as an agenda item, they could not take immediate action but would forward the concerns to the appropriate departments, including the Building Inspector and Police Department.

VISITATION

5:45 P.M. – **PUBLIC HEARING** – Eversource Pole Hearing – 35 Pinewood Drive.

Motion made by Mr. Alves to open the public hearing at 5:45 p.m. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.** An Eversource representative explained that the property at 35 Pinewood Road is seeking to install solar, and in order to accommodate the additional load, a new transformer is required. To install the transformer, Eversource is requesting approval to place a new mid-span pole approximately 95 feet south of existing pole 287/1 and about 35 feet across the road. Mr. Silva stated he had no concerns if the pole is necessary for the solar installation and no resident's object. Mr. Gennette asked how Eversource determines when a customer must pay for upgrades such as transformers or new lines, noting a resident who was quoted \$16,000 for similar work. The Eversource representative confirmed that customers are responsible for the cost of required upgrades, including the pole and transformer, and that the project will not proceed until the property owner pays those costs. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to approve Eversource to put up a pole and transformer at 35 Pinewood Drive. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.** **Motion made by Mr. Alves** to close the public hearing at 5:50 p.m. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

6:00 P.M. – **PUBLIC HEARING** – Alteration of Premises – Casa Pizzeria, LLC – 325 East Street. **Motion made by Mr. Alves** to open the public hearing at 6:00 p.m. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.** Mr. Carvalho explained that he expanded the first floor of Casa Pizzeria by reclaiming space previously used as an apartment, noting that the business needed additional room. He stated that all interior work has been completed and approved by the Planning Board. Mr. Strange confirmed that the application before the Board pertains only to the interior alterations, which have been fully signed off. Mr. Carvalho also discussed plans to reside the building and raised questions about the small outdoor patio area. He described confusion between departments regarding occupancy, plumbing code, and outdoor seating requirements, stating that his architect believes the patio should not trigger additional code obligations. He requested clarification on whether alcohol could be served on the patio.

A neighboring property owner, Mr. Rubbo, expressed concerns about noise, equipment placement, and impacts on his tenants and property value. He referenced exhaust fans and a walk-in cooler he believes are too close to the property line. The Board advised that these issues fall under the Building Inspector and Planning Board. Board members emphasized that the current action relates only to the interior alteration for ABCC purposes and does not authorize outdoor seating or alcohol service. Mr. Strange noted that adding patio seating affects occupancy calculations and could require sprinklers. The Board advised Mr. Carvalho to work directly with the Building Inspector and Planning Board regarding any outdoor seating or patio use. Mr. Carvalho acknowledged the guidance and stated he may delay patio plans while continuing to work with the appropriate departments. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to approve the alteration of Casa Pizzeria for the interior premises and anything else to have Mr. Carvalho come back with a site plan and the blessing from the Building Inspector and Planning Board. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0. Motion made by Mr. Alves** to close the public hearing at 6:18 p.m. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

6:15 P.M. – **PUBLIC HEARING** – Nuisance Dog – 26 Wilson Street.

Motion made by Mr. Silva to open the public hearing. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.** Ms. Anderson, Animal Control Officer, reported an ongoing issue involving two dogs—a Rottweiler and a Cane Corso—running loose on Wilson Street. She clarified that this matter was being presented as a nuisance dog hearing, not a dangerous dog hearing. Ms. Anderson stated the dogs had been loose multiple times over the past several months, and despite leaving messages and notices, she had received no response from the owners. She also confirmed that the dogs were not currently licensed. Ms. Marques, of 26 Wilson Street, identified herself as the caretaker of the dogs and stated they were her son's pets. She disagreed with portions of Ms. Anderson's account and said she had been attempting to maintain her fencing, though she was not financially able to install a new one. She stated the dogs were young and sometimes attempted to escape but denied that they roamed the neighborhood extensively.

Ms. Lopez, of 36 Wilson Street, addressed the Board and read the following prepared statement: "As I said, my name is Jennifer Lopez. I live at 36 Wilson Street. I would like, if possible, to have my written statements to the board of selectmen reflected on the record as part of my statement here tonight if it isn't already. For the last four and a half months my neighbors' two dogs, a Cane Corso and a Rottweiler, have repeatedly come onto my property without restraint or supervision. These incidents have been documented with both Animal Control and the Ludlow Police Dispatch. Most recently on Friday, May 15th, the same day I had a six-foot fence installed around my backyard my dogs and I were outside when the newly fenced area when the neighboring Cane Corso once again got loose and entered my property. The dog approached and sniffed my fence where my dogs were standing on the other side. I recorded video and photographs of the dog wandering near my side of my house as well as in my front yard where it came within approximately seven feet of my front door. I have provided dated and timestamped videos to the Ludlow Animal Control Officer as evidence of my complaint. The installation of my fence was intended to create a safe and secure enclosed area for my dogs on my property. Despite these efforts the neighboring dogs, specifically the Cane Corso, continues to roam freely onto the unfenced portions of my yard and is able to approach the fenced area where my dogs are located. My issue here isn't about whether the dogs are friendly, it's about an ongoing failure to properly contain and control two very large animals that have repeatedly entered private property without

control or supervision. Although my property is my main concern, the broader concern is that these dogs should not be at large in the neighborhood at all. Given their size appropriate containment is not optional, it's necessary for public safety. I'm requesting the board require the dogs to be properly contained or restrained so they cannot enter my property at all, and I would like repercussions for failing to comply with the board's decision to be clearly outlined. Thank you to the board for your time, consideration, and attention to these safety issues."

The Board reviewed photos and videos submitted by Ms. Lopez and discussed prior documented incidents. Board members expressed concern about continued leash-law violations, lack of proper containment, and the absence of current dog licenses or vaccination records. Ms. Anderson discussed safety concerns related to the dogs' age, size, breed characteristics, and the proximity of neighborhood children and elderly residents. She recommended the installation of a secure kennel or dog run, repairs to the fencing, proper licensing, vaccinations, and obedience training. She stated that a kennel could reasonably be installed within two weeks and that dog licensing should be completed immediately. She confirmed she would conduct follow-up inspections as needed.

Board members emphasized that the dogs must be contained at all times and discussed potential consequences if compliance is not met, including impoundment or fines under Massachusetts General Laws. Ms. Anderson stated that if the dogs were to be loose again before corrective measures are implemented, she would impound them until the containment issue is resolved. Additional comments were heard from neighbors, including Ms. Lebel of 43 Wilson Street, who reported incidents of the dogs approaching her property and extended periods of barking. Further discussion occurred regarding the responsibilities of the owner and caretaker, the frequency of loose-dog incidents, and the need for cooperation with Animal Control.

The Board concluded that the dogs constitute a nuisance as defined by law and agreed that containment measures must be implemented. The Board expressed that the dogs must be securely confined, with the owner and caretaker required to work with Animal Control to meet all outlined requirements within the recommended timeline. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to declare the dogs at 26 Wilson Street nuisance dogs, that they be licensed tomorrow and further that containment be done within 2 weeks to satisfy the dog officer's discretion. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0. Motion made by Mr. Alves** to close the public hearing at 6:48 P.M. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

6:30 P.M. – CARES Coalition – Unable to attend.

6:45 P.M. – Vincent Mason – Town Accountant Interview

Mr. Rosenblum outlined the interview format for the Town Accountant position. Mr. Vincent Mason introduced himself as a Senior Financial Analyst with Holyoke Public Schools, describing his background in actuarial science, finance, and accounting as well as recent experience with account reconciliation and budgeting. Board members asked a series of questions regarding his approach to minimizing errors, reducing costs, resolving account variances, and identifying financial discrepancies. Mr. Mason provided examples from his current role involving budget review, vendor cost analysis, software training, reconciliation between school and city accounts, and communication of financial information to non-financial staff. He explained his involvement in budget preparation, regular meetings with principals and cabinet members, and familiarity with Munis software. In response to questions about working with others and handling budget requests outside approved allocations, he emphasized collaboration, escalation when appropriate, and maintaining a calm, direct working style. Mr. Mason asked for clarification regarding meeting schedules and work hours, and Mr. Rosenblum provided the expected timelines for town meetings and Select Board meetings. Mr. Mason closed by expressing appreciation for the interview and his interest in serving the Ludlow community.

7:15 P.M. – Michelle White – Town Accountant Interview

Mr. Rosenblum began the interview by outlining the format and invited Ms. White to speak about her background. Ms. White explained that she has spent 16 of her 18 years in school finance at the Wachusett Regional School District, with two years in between at Westford Public Schools. She described her experience with reconciliations, audits, grant

compliance, year-end processing, and extensive use of the Munis financial system. She highlighted her work in Westford where she resolved significant system deficiencies, including implementing payroll encumbrances and correcting revolving account configurations. She noted she returned to Wachusett due to family needs and is now seeking to move into municipal finance. In response to questions, Ms. White explained that she frequently presents financial information in plain terms to principals and administrative staff and provides training to secretaries on purchasing procedures and student activity funds. She confirmed she currently lives in Warren and would commute.

Mr. Alves asked about her role in the budget process, and Ms. White described her responsibility for preparing salary budgets, including step increases under bargaining agreements. She also detailed her involvement in the district's end-of-year report, noting she completes the majority of the schedules, and her collaboration with the Treasurer in processing warrants. She also works with the Department of Revenue on year-end certifications. Mr. Silva asked about addressing variances between accounting offices. Ms. White stated she has maintained balanced accounts in her previous roles and described reconciling two full years of unreconciled books after returning to Wachusett. When asked about Schedule A and free cash, she compared them to the school district's end-of-year reporting and expressed interest in joining the Massachusetts Municipal Auditors and Accountants Association to strengthen her municipal knowledge.

Mr. Gennette sought clarification on her relocation status, and Ms. White explained she is moving from Holden to Warren. She emphasized her attention to detail, organization, and proactive approach in preventing budget errors. She cited prior cost-savings achieved by eliminating the need for outside accounting support. Mr. Rosenblum asked about her experience with Munis and her approach to working with others. Ms. White described herself as collaborative but firm when necessary, particularly in enforcing financial controls. She stated she would not process expenditures that exceed available funds without proper approvals.

During her closing questions, Ms. White asked about the status of the Town Accountant role and the priorities for the position. Mr. Rosenblum explained that the previous accountant had resigned and identified key priorities as rebuilding the working relationship with the Treasurer/Collector, transitioning away from reliance on CLA, and ensuring timely free cash reconciliation by October. Ms. White inquired further about the town's use of Munis, and staff explained that while the system is used for payroll and accounting, not all modules are fully utilized. They also discussed efforts to clean up data and recent improvements such as employee self-service.

Ms. White asked about current financial challenges. Board members noted pressure to remain under Proposition 2½, rising insurance costs, the town's history of unsuccessful overrides, and the need to collect outstanding receivables. They discussed stabilizing free cash and rebuilding stabilization funds. Mr. Rosenblum emphasized the importance of timely reconciliations to support budget development.

Ms. White concluded by stating she enjoyed the conversation, values financial stewardship, and believes she would bring stability and strong oversight to the position.

7:15 P.M. – Ashley Terranova – Town Accountant Interview

During the interview, Mr. Rosenblum welcomed the applicant, Ashley Terranova, and invited her to introduce herself. Ms. Terranova explained that she currently resides in Virginia but hopes to begin her career in Massachusetts. She shared that she completed her undergraduate degree in business management in Boston and is now pursuing a master's degree with a concentration in accounting. She previously served as Town Accountant in Westerly, Rhode Island before exploring private accounting, ultimately realizing that she prefers municipal finance.

Board members asked Ms. Terranova a series of questions regarding her experience and skills. In response to questions from Mr. Gennette, she described her strong attention to detail and her interest in problem-solving as ways she minimizes errors. She also discussed helping reduce costs in her current role by ensuring timely invoice payments and assisting in implementing AI tools that reduce processing time.

Mr. Silva asked about reconciling accounts receivable and minimizing variances between departments. Ms. Terranova noted that monthly cash reconciliation is key and suggested that increasing the frequency of accounts receivable reconciliations could help reduce discrepancies. She stated she does not have experience with Schedule A or free cash certification but is willing to learn. In response to Mr. Sanches, she said she does not yet have experience with Massachusetts municipal finance requirements but would relocate as soon as the following week if hired.

Mr. Alves asked about her budgeting experience, and Ms. Terranova explained that she created budget books and later became more involved in understanding the levels of approval and the overall budget process. She said she has not presented budgets publicly but has supported the preparation of memos and visual aids. Mr. Rosenblum asked about her familiarity with Munis, and Ms. Terranova said she had taught herself the system in her previous role and prefers it over the system she currently uses. She described herself as a team-oriented person who prefers to collaborate when making decisions, especially when new to a position.

Ms. Terranova asked clarifying questions about Chapter 90 funding, accounts receivable processes, and cherry sheet revenue. Board members and staff explained that Chapter 90 funds support road work, that all municipal cash first comes through the Collector's office before being allocated in Munis, that the town uses a Unipay online payment system, and that cherry sheets outline state aid approved by the Legislature and the Governor. Ms. Terranova thanked the board for the opportunity to interview.

Board members discussed the three interviewed candidates, with several members expressing that Michelle White stood out as the strongest applicant. Mr. Silva stated that Michelle White had significantly more experience than the other candidates, particularly with Munis, which he viewed as a major benefit. Mr. Gennette agreed, noting that all three candidates were skilled, but Michelle was the most prepared and demonstrated strong knowledge of free cash, proactive practices, and Munis. He expressed some concern about hiring a candidate who had never served as a Town Accountant but said that if the board chose to make a decision that evening, his vote would be for Michelle White.

Mr. Sanches also supported Michelle White, citing her proficiency in Munis, supervisory experience, and ability to manage complex workloads. He noted that although the posting remained open until May 28, Michelle was clearly the strongest among the current applicants. Ms. Ribeiro clarified that while the website requires a posting deadline, the town can continue accepting applications until the position is filled.

Mr. Alves echoed the comments about Michelle's strong experience, stating that the other two candidates appeared capable but were still early in their careers, making the role a significant leap. He suggested that extending the posting could be considered but acknowledged the uncertainty of attracting more qualified applicants. He emphasized the need to balance experience, candidate availability, and the town's current situation.

Mr. Rosenblum observed that Michelle's experience on the school side involved working with a budget comparable in size and complexity to the town's. He noted that her familiarity with CLA and her expertise in Munis would benefit the town, and he did not expect significantly stronger candidates to apply at this stage. Mr. Strange agreed, stating that the candidate pool had been extremely limited since the previous Town Accountant's departure and that Michelle's municipal experience, though school-based, was still highly valuable. He believed she could learn the town side quickly, with CLA providing limited transitional support if needed.

Ms. Ribeiro advised against waiting for additional applicants, noting that the town had already received an unusually high number of candidates with public accounting backgrounds. She emphasized that Michelle's school finance experience was transferable, given the size of the school budget and the volume of financial activity. She also highlighted Michelle's familiarity with student activity accounts and her interest in joining the Massachusetts Municipal Auditors and Accounting Association. Mr. Rosenblum added that school budgets often involve more frequent adjustments than town budgets, making that experience beneficial. Mr. Gennette agreed that her school background was helpful but

stressed that the role is centered on town-side responsibilities and that Michelle would need to acclimate to municipal requirements. He stated, however, that he believed she could do so. **Motion made by Mr. Gennette** to offer Michelle White the Town Accountant's position and move her to contract negotiations. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE

26-77 Tapestry Health – Request for Opioid Reimbursement in the amount of \$7,144.63.

Mr. Gennette expressed concern about allocating Opioid Settlement funds to Tapestry Health, stating that he preferred the funds be used for Ludlow-based organizations serving Ludlow residents. He noted that Tapestry is a large regional organization and questioned whether the request demonstrated that funds would remain local. Mr. Silva explained that the Board had previously denied Tapestry's initial request until additional information was provided. After receiving further documentation showing services delivered to Ludlow residents, the Board had agreed to support funding contingent on Tapestry submitting bills and supporting data. He stated that unless the current request failed to meet those requirements, he did not see grounds to deny it.

Mr. Gennette said he agreed that if Tapestry could prove the funds directly benefit Ludlow, he would view the request differently, but he was unsure whether the current submission demonstrated that. Mr. Rosenblum asked for clarification on whether the data provided reflected Ludlow-specific services. Mr. Strange confirmed that the data sheet included only Ludlow information. Mr. Alves reported that he had spoken with the Health Department earlier in the day and received additional Ludlow-specific data from Tapestry, including numbers of individuals served, encounters, and supply usage. He noted that the Board had previously approved \$20,000 for Tapestry in the fall after a presentation and a letter of support from the Board of Health. In his view, quarterly in-person presentations were unnecessary as long as Tapestry continued to provide adequate documentation.

Mr. Gennette asked whether the Health Department had validated the information. Mr. Alves clarified that the data was provided by Tapestry to the Health Department, who then forwarded it to him. Mr. Sanches asked about the balance of the Opioid Settlement account and the rules governing disbursement. Mr. Rosenblum stated that the balance was substantial—over \$100,000—and that funds are typically distributed to Ludlow CARES, the Michael J. Dias Foundation, and Tapestry. Mr. Strange explained that the state sets specific criteria for eligible uses, including prevention, education, treatment, and recovery, and that the town must file an annual report documenting expenditures. He confirmed that Tapestry's services fall within the allowable categories.

Mr. Alves reiterated that Tapestry had previously demonstrated that funds would be used for Ludlow residents and that the Board of Health had supported their request. He stated he was comfortable with the current submission. Mr. Rosenblum noted that while itemized receipts may not be feasible due to HIPAA and inventory-based supplies, the Board had previously required that any funding be used specifically for Ludlow services, and the data provided reflected that. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to approve the Tapestry request to reimburse the amount of \$7,144.63. **Mr. Alves second. Motion passed 4-1.**

26-78 MMWEC – 2026 2nd Quarter Inspection of Natural Gas Pipeline. **Motion made by Mr. Alves** to file. **Mr. Silva second. Motion passed 4-0-1.**

26-79 Green Day Recycling – Requesting permission to place temporary signage at the intersection of Center Street & the Mass Pike or other high visibility intersections to promote Electronics Recycling Event with the First Church to be held on Saturday, August 22nd.

Mr. Silva asked whether the upcoming First Church recycling event is free or fee-based. Board members believed it is a paid event, noting that fees are typically listed in online or newspaper advertisements even if not shown on signs. Mr. Gennette questioned whether the fact that the event charges fees affects the Board's approval of signage, since the town generally does not endorse paid events. Mr. Alves noted the event was approved last year on the basis that it is not-for-profit and provides a community service. Mr. Silva added that the event primarily helps residents dispose of items properly.

Mr. Sanches asked whether the DPW installs the signs; Mr. Rosenblum clarified that the organizers place the signs themselves. Mr. Sanches also raised concern about the request for placement at “other high-visibility intersections,” asking whether that would allow signs to be placed broadly throughout town. Mr. Alves suggested approving the same locations as last year rather than expanding the scope. Mr. Rosenblum said the Board could request specific locations to avoid excessive signage. Mr. Gennette suggested limiting signs to town property. Mr. Silva proposed approving only the Center Street/Mass Pike location for now and having the organizers return with any additional requested sites. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to approve the Green Day Recycling permission to place temporary signage at the intersection of Center Street and the Mass Pike. If they request other sites we’ll have to have the exact locations identified. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

26-80 Ludlow Parade Committee – Board to accept the new Parade Route due to bridge closure. **Motion made by Mr. Gennette** to approve the Ludlow Parade Committee’s request for the new parade route due to the bridge closure. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.** Mr. Alves announced the Memorial Day parade route, stating that the parade will begin at the Gremio and proceed up Winsor Street to Stevens Street, then from Stevens to East Street, continuing down East Street to Memorial Park. Mr. Rosenblum noted that closing Putts Bridge and West Street, as done in the traditional route, would create significant traffic issues on Memorial Day. Mr. Alves added that the viewing stand, typically located near Walgreens, will instead be positioned at East Street School this year.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign agreement between the Town of Ludlow and Springfield Water & Sewer Commission for Wastewater Services (tabled from May 5, 2026).

Mr. Strange reported that the matter has been forwarded to Town Counsel for review and the Town is currently awaiting their response. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to table. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Ludlow (DPW) and Dennis K. Burke, Inc. for FY27 Gas Agreement (tabled from May 5, 2026). **Motion made by Mr. Gennette** to file. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

NEW BUSINESS

Board to approve and sign minutes from meeting of May 5, 2026. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to sign minutes from meeting of May 5, 2026, with all members present. **Mr. Alves second. All in favor. Motion passed 4-0.**

Board to approve and sign the contract between System 4 and the Town of Ludlow for cleaning services at Hubbard Memorial Library in the amount of \$26,388.

Mr. Silva asked whether this contract is an annual item. Mr. Strange confirmed that it is and noted that while System 4 is a new provider and slightly more expensive than last year’s company, Melissa is pleased with their services. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to approve and sign the contract between System 4 and the Town of Ludlow for cleaning services at Hubbard Memorial Library in the amount of \$26,388. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly vote to authorize \$2,473 in Building Infrastructure funds to repair sprinkler system at 63 Chestnut Street. **Motion made by Mr. Silva** to authorize \$2,473 in Building Infrastructure funds to repair sprinkler system at 63 Chestnut Street. **Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to appoint Mike Kelliher to the Capital Improvement Planning Committee as the Finance Committee representative. **Motion made by Mr. Sanches** to appoint Mike Kelliher to the Capital Improvement Planning Committee as the Finance Committee representative. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss and possibly vote to enter into an inter-municipal agreement with the Town of Palmer for shared veteran’s services.

Mr. Segundo reported that the Town of Palmer reached out about a month ago as their Veterans Service Officer was leaving and they wished to explore consolidating or merging services with Ludlow. After several meetings with Palmer's Town Manager, a contract was drafted that reflects terms acceptable to both communities. Palmer is seeking full veterans services comparable to what Ludlow provides, with the requirement that staff be physically present in Palmer one full day and two half days each week. In return, Palmer's payments would allow Ludlow to convert its current part-time employee to full-time status and contribute \$12,000 annually toward Veterans Center expenses. All financial responsibilities for Palmer's veterans, including Chapter 115 benefits and office expenses, will remain within Palmer's budget, and Palmer will issue quarterly payments to Ludlow based on the contract.

Mr. Silva asked whether the arrangement was manageable, and Mr. Segundo confirmed it was, noting that the expanded staffing—one employee moving to full-time and an existing full-time grant-funded claims specialist—would allow the work to be covered. Several board members expressed strong support for the collaboration, with Mr. Gennette emphasizing the value of bringing in outside revenue and regionalizing services. He asked whether the workload would be manageable, and Mr. Segundo said they planned to operate on a trial basis until January 1, after which both towns could decide whether to continue with an annual contract as required by the state.

Mr. Sanches asked whether the contract had been reviewed by legal counsel. Mr. Strange stated it had not yet, but the format was based on state and Northampton district templates. Questions were raised regarding the part-time employee's transition to full-time, and Mr. Segundo clarified that if the agreement ended, the employee would revert to part-time hours. The employee would be made aware of the trial nature of the position once all approvals were in place. Board members discussed the impact of benefits, accrual of time off, and potential costs. The Town Administrator noted that such terms would be clearly outlined in an offer letter. Mr. Alves asked whether Palmer's payments fully covered staffing and benefit costs. Mr. Segundo said the numbers were close, and that after factoring in Palmer's \$12,000 contribution, Ludlow would remain slightly in the positive.

Board members also discussed the potential for similar partnerships with other towns in the future and the added benefit of broader regional support when seeking state grants. Mr. Alves noted that Ludlow already assists veterans from other communities on a courtesy basis when neighboring towns lack coverage, and that this agreement at least provides compensation for services that Ludlow would otherwise provide without reimbursement. **Motion made by Mr. Genette** to approve and enter into an inter-municipal agreement with the Town of Palmer for shared veteran's services as long as it is approved through legal counsel. **Mr. Silva second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.**

Board to discuss updating the town's Financial Policy Manual.

Mr. Strange informed the board that he recently attended a Division of Local Services workshop focused on municipal financial policies and noted that DLS now provides comprehensive policy templates for towns to use. He suggested that it may be an appropriate time to review and update the town's financial policy manual, originally adopted in June 2019, and to consider adding new policies, including a budget process policy. He asked the board for its thoughts on forming a working group or subcommittee, possibly involving finance staff, the Finance Committee, and others, to begin this review.

Mr. Silva agreed that the idea was worthwhile and asked for clarification on whether the proposal was simply to update the current manual. Mr. Strange explained that while the manual needs updates, the process would also include creating additions where necessary. Mr. Sanches reviewed the history and structure of the existing manual and confirmed that all policies within it were adopted together in 2019. He asked about recommended review cycles and whether an annual review might be appropriate, especially as vendors and practices change. He noted examples such as vendor references appearing in policies and the absence of adoption dates on individual policy pages.

Mr. Alves supported including a formal review frequency in the updated manual. He suggested that much of the work should begin internally among town hall staff before recommendations are brought to the Finance Committee and the Select Board. He

envisioned a process involving reviewing DLS templates to identify gaps, determining where the town's current policies differ from recommended practices, and strengthening areas that may now be outdated. He also inquired about the extent of DLS support under the current model, and Mr. Strange explained that while DLS no longer conducts full policy development for towns, it provides templates and guidance for local adoption.

Board members discussed the usefulness of shifting away from naming specific vendors in policy language, preferring more general wording to avoid repeated amendments. Mr. Sanches reiterated the value of annual review and emphasized that clear adoption dates are important for enforceability. He supported the creation of a budget process policy as well. Mr. Alves recommended including this work in the board's goal-setting process for the upcoming year.

Mr. Rosenblum noted that the town already has a budget calendar, though Mr. Strange explained that it was developed without broad departmental input and is adjusted annually as needed. Mr. Rosenblum agreed that it would be helpful for staff to review the new DLS templates and identify any missing policies or necessary changes before bringing recommendations to the board. Mr. Strange said he would meet with the assessor, treasurer/collector, and accounting staff to develop a plan and prepare a red-line version of proposed revisions for future board review. Mr. Strange to work on.

Board to discuss effective/adoption dates to the Financial Policy Manual and Town Administrator Evaluation policy.

Mr. Strange reported that, following a request from Mr. Sanches, the town had added adoption or effective dates directly onto its policies. He noted that the Town Administrator Evaluation Policy was adopted on July 8, 2025, and the Financial Policy Manual was adopted on July 2, 2019.

Town Administrator to provide an update on the FY26 Free Cash certification amount.

Mr. Strange updated the board on the recent free cash certification inquiry. He explained that after questions were raised at the previous meeting, CLA conducted a deeper review to determine why the original free cash estimate of approximately 6.5 million dollars had certified at only 3.2 million dollars. He stated that the primary issue was uncollected revenue, noting that the town had 2.8 million dollars in unpaid real estate taxes for fiscal year 2025 due to the town not issuing demand notices or initiating the tax title process. He said that these steps had not been completed because the necessary staffing was not in place, but that Michelle Hill had since issued the fiscal year 2026 demands. He added that the town also had about one million dollars in outstanding grant reimbursements on both the school and town side, representing funds the town had been awarded and expended but not yet received. He said these two issues together accounted for roughly three million dollars of the shortfall.

Mr. Rosenblum asked for clarification on the grant funding, and Mr. Strange confirmed that the town was waiting on reimbursement for grants already approved and spent. Mr. Sanches asked whether the specific grants had been identified, and Mr. Strange said they had, noting that most were familiar but some would require additional follow-up with the granting authorities. He cited a Mass Gaming Commission grant as one example. He stated that staff would work to collect the outstanding grant funds. Mr. Alves emphasized the importance of keeping current-year receivables and grants up to date in addition to addressing past-due items, noting that maintaining levels consistent with prior years would have resulted in substantially more free cash. Mr. Rosenblum agreed that the difference could have been even greater.

Mr. Gennette shifted the discussion to the upcoming fiscal year and expressed concern about financial pressures, including state aid reductions, rising fuel and insurance costs, and broader economic uncertainty. He suggested that the board may need to consider a freeze on new positions, limit new capital spending to existing lease obligations, and take a more conservative approach overall until financial conditions become clearer. He said that entering the next budget season in a stronger position could be beneficial if the board adopted early cost-containment measures.

Mr. Alves asked whether the suggested freeze would apply to the remainder of the current fiscal year or to decisions about the next fiscal year. Mr. Gennette responded that both might

need to be considered, given the uncertainty in free cash and the town's financial outlook. He described his comments as preliminary discussion and emphasized the need to be proactive. Mr. Alves noted that many of the decisions mentioned would occur naturally through the budget process but agreed that reducing costs where possible would be necessary. Mr. Gennette reiterated the importance of limiting overtime, controlling fuel expenditures, and avoiding new positions. Mr. Rosenblum added that improved diligence in collecting outstanding revenues would also be important. He agreed that limiting capital spending to existing obligations for one year might be prudent. He noted that with a new Town Accountant, earlier and more accurate reconciliations should strengthen the budget development process and improve planning related to stabilization funds and other financial considerations.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mr. Strange provided a recap of the recent Town Meeting for the public. He reported that all articles passed with the exception of one. Notable approvals included funding for electronic voting devices for Town Meeting, the fiscal year 2027 budget with approximately \$100,000 in excess capacity, and updates indicating that the Senate's local aid numbers appear to be about \$200,000 more favorable than the Governor's proposal used during budget development. Town Meeting also approved new playground equipment for Whitney Park, three additional all-alcohol on-premises licenses, a ban on cryptocurrency ATMs, restructuring of the Recreation Department and Recreation Commission, and adoption of the Stretch Energy Code. Mr. Silva noted that the alcohol licenses still require state approval.

Mr. Strange stated that no action was taken on several articles, including the public safety HVAC bond, which the chiefs withdrew due to prohibitive costs. Additional articles without appropriation included the DIF special revenue fund for Stevens Street paving, general stabilization, the LHS turf field replacement fund, Munis improvement funding, capital stabilization, the park and recreation stabilization fund, and OPEB. No action was also taken on proposed new dates for Town Meeting and the town election. The only article that was voted down was the amendment to the unreasonable noise bylaw, which would have established maximum decibel levels; the current bylaw continues to have no specific dBA standards.

Mr. Strange explained that all approved bylaw changes must be reviewed and approved by the Attorney General before becoming effective, typically a two- to three-month process, meaning final approval should be received in the fall. Home Rule Petitions, including the additional all-alcohol licenses and the recreation restructuring, must be sponsored by the town's legislators, voted on by the House and Senate, and then signed by the Governor before taking effect.

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. Silva reminded the public that the upcoming parade route has changed and encouraged residents to attend the Memorial Day events. Mr. Gennette briefly noted that his review of diesel costs revealed promising opportunities and that he looks forward to presenting findings to the board. Mr. Sanches thanked Mr. Strange and his team for promptly updating policy documents and adding adoption dates. Mr. Alves reviewed the upcoming community event calendar, including the wreath-laying ceremony on May 22, the candlelight vigil on May 24, the Memorial Day Parade on May 25 followed by a ceremony at the Veterans Memorial, the Town Hall closure on May 25, the Children's Bike Parade and Rodeo on June 13, and the Town-Wide Tag Sale on June 20. He also wished everyone a happy belated Mother's Day.

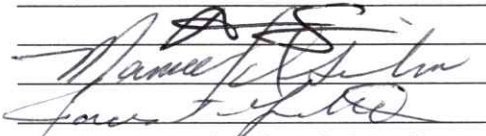
Mr. Rosenblum reflected on Town Meeting, referencing a past "hot mic" incident to emphasize his longstanding concern that residents do not thoroughly question or discuss

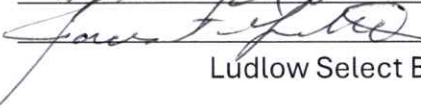
the budget during Town Meeting, despite it being the most significant item for consideration. He noted that while discussions often arise on individual articles, such as the Recreation Director position, there is little detailed debate during the budget presentation itself. He expressed his belief that the Town Meeting process, while the form of government the town must follow, has become somewhat outdated and financially limiting, as towns can only seek appropriations twice a year. He thanked those who participated in the meeting and remarked on the importance of distinguishing personal opinions from constituent representation. Mr. Gennette added that the newly approved electronic voting devices may increase transparency by showing how precinct members vote. Mr. Rosenblum concluded by noting that citizen concerns drove the proposed noise bylaw changes and predicting that noise issues and potential license reviews may continue to arise in the future.

Motion made by Mr. Silva to close the meeting at 9:02 P.M. Mr. Gennette second. All in favor. Motion passed 5-0.



Chairman





Ludlow Select Board

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