The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, November 19, 2019 began at 6:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Conference Room, Town Hall.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:36
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Members Present: Derek DeBarge, Chairman, Carmina Fernandes, Antonio Goncalves, William Rosenblum and Manuel Silva

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Tax Classification Hearing:

Mr. Debarge: Ok we will open up the meeting with the Tax Classification Hearing continuance, alright.

Mr. Alves: Alright, we can start, our chair, Tony Rosa will start.

Mr. Rosa: Ok so we would like to report that all work for fiscal year 2020 has been completed and has been approved by the Department of Revenue. The fiscal year 2020 values are as of January 1, 2019 and are based on sales between January 1, 2017 and December 31, 2018. Our current assessment level is approximately 94%. The DOR allows assessment levels between 90 and 110%. Values increased as the result of interim adjustments of approximately 2-4% across the board. A total valuation of the Town increased by 3.2%. New growth increased by .8% from $651,756.00 last year to $658,000.00 for fiscal year 2020. The minimal residential factor is 86.9934. The tax levy has increased by $3,054,253.36 from $41,195,060.36 in fiscal year 2019 to $44,249,313.72 in fiscal year 2020 and is .026% below the maximal allowable levy of $44,260,652.00. The tax rate at 100% will be $20.62 compared to last year's $19.82 which is an $.80 increase, which would be the same amount as last year and a 4% increase. Under the current classification rate of 100%, the average single-family tax bill will increase by $298, up 6.7% from $4,469 last year to $4,767 this year. The average commercial tax bill will increase by $669, a 6.7% increase from $9,950 last year to $10,619 this year. Any attempt to shift more of the tax burden from the residential to the CIP classes will result in a significant increase to the CIP taxes since these classes comprise only 20.45% of the total value of the Town. The impact of any further shift is illustrated in tables 2 and 3 on page 2. Typically, this is an area that you guys ask about as far as what kind of impact that would be if we did shift the tax burden, so if you look at tables 2 and 3 it tells you based on percentage that would be how much that would actually translate into dollars. Then due to the disproportionate increase created by imposing a split rate, the Assessor's office strongly recommends keeping the classification rate at 100%. Any questions?

Mr. Silva: Yeah, I have a big question, why did we not have this like three, four days ago?

Mr. Alves: It wasn't ready until today.

Mr. Silva: Because we, I actually will tell you I did mine, because I did the recap, I went online and did a lot of the work, but I know my colleagues here now got this before them and as you can see they are like, trying you know to compute, do this, do that. So, I think that we should have this a lot earlier.

Mr. Rosa: I think going forward, Joe, it wouldn't be a problem if we knew in advance,

Mr. Silva: But, I got to tell you this is the third straight year I have asked for that early. I'm just telling you now. I have asked for this a few days in advance so that we can look at it and because we ultimately have to make the decision.

Mr. Rosa: I think that's a fair and reasonable request.

Mr. Alves: Its fair, stuff got approved by DOR last week so there wasn't much time to prepare and quite honestly Manny, whatever we do during the year, sets this up. So, you kind of know exactly what's going on until we get here. There's no secret what we are spending and how it effects the tax rate. So, yeah you can get all of this but is it really going to give you a better picture of what we are doing throughout the year or you just want to make a good decision,

Mr. Silva: Me, no.

Mr. Alves: Okay.

Mr. Silva: My members, I do believe so.

Mr. Rosa: Joe, I agree with what he is saying what I think should happen is, I know originally, we were trying to set this meeting up for last month, but we were waiting on other offices in the Town to do what they needed to do, for us to do what we needed to do. I think, knowing this going forward next

year if we plan on doing, having the Tax Classification Hearing in November, you give these other departments a deadline that they have to their numbers in by X date and then we also need to allow Paul enough time, because Paul actually, Paul Kapinos is the one that actually comes up with this. We are going to have to give Paul a week or so to come up with this as well.

Mr. Alves: We did, we got approved last year so once the numbers are all in we can compute this and make sense of it and put something in front of people. Rushing it is not the answer either, you know, just because you want it early doesn't mean it's a good solution. It's the right data at the right time. Yeah, it could have been a day early. I don't think we have given it to you the day of the last two years, maybe a couple of days ahead. This year was really down to the last couple of days here. But literally we got our numbers approved last week so then we could move forward to this. We can't do it three weeks ago without getting approved first.

Mr. Silva: No, no, no I'm not talking about three weeks ago, certainly yesterday morning.

Mr. Rosa: Yeah, right I,

Mr. Silva: You got a little bit of time.

Talking over each other.

Mr. Silva: And it's a good thing I left my stuff at home because I left all my numbers and things that I did yesterday when I looked at some of the values and a lot of it has to do with values and what not, but I am just looking out for them. I don't know if you agree or not, but I think they need it a little earlier.

Mr. Rosa: Yeah, I think it is a reasonable request and I think we can accommodate it.

Mr. Alves: I think we can try it for sure, you know.

Mr. Silva: Especially, what it is before us, it's significant. We are talking about an average bill of $300. That is going to be one of the highest bill increases for average that we have had in some time.

Mr. Rosa: Right. Well, last year was the same amount $.80.

Mr. Silva: No, no let's not go to the $.80, let's not go to tax rates because they mean zero, to me they mean zero.

Mr. Rosa: Well you are saying that it was a significant,

Mr. Silva: I'm talking about the dollar amount, right $300.

Mr. Alves: But this isn't new, we talked about this 6 months ago where we were going to go, and we are kind of right there. We are actually below what we projected which is wonderful.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 11 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Silva: And the $.80, it's a great number, however let's take away the increase in value and figure out where the $.80 is? It's now not $.80, it's a lot more.

Mr. Alves: It was .....at one point.

Mr. Silva: Because when you increase the values you know what happens to the rate, it comes down.

Mr. Alves: Sure.

Mr. Silva: So, the difference there, it will probably be $1.60 or so. That's why we need these numbers, what I'm saying is we need all of this stuff to make clear,

Mr. Alves: Absolutely.

Mr. Silva: decisions on what to do because we are at full levy this year, which is not a great thing, but we are still under the levy which is...

Mr. Alves: Only by $7,000.

Mr. Silva: I've got $11,000.

Mr. Rosa: It's not a lot, regardless, it's not a lot.

Talking over each other.

Mr. Silva: We have been consistently under, yes, we used some of our revenues to decrease the tax bill but it's significant and I will tell you the average is what did you say $298 so mine is going up $600 and

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:36
TOWN OF LUDLOW

I'm just talking about me, one property. So, it's stuff that we need to discuss, it's stuff that we need to have before us, anyway continue.

Mr. Rosa: I agree, and I think Joe, I think Manny wants to hear some kind of commitment that we are going to make a much better effort to get it to him in advance.

Mr. Alves: The effort is the same every year guys, if I can get it,

Mr. Silva: Joe, Joe please Joe it's not.

Mr. Alves: Can you first stop with your tantrums that you like to throw at these meetings. The values came in last week.

Mr. Silva: Okay.

Mr. Alves: So, we put this together, we worked on it, present today. That's as good as we can do this year. There's nothing else you can do, stomp your foot or whatever, this is when it showed up here. We got plenty, we got all night here to talk about it and discuss it. I don't see you knocking on my door once a year to talk about this or any of the values. Maybe one or two people on the Board come into my office so, the bantering it has to stop at these meetings we are here for one thing.

Mr. Silva: Anyways, get it here earlier.

Mr. Debarge: Can we move on?

Mr. Silva: Yes.

Mr. Alves: Yes, please.

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

Mrs. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman?

Mr. Debarge: Mrs. Fernandes.

Mrs. Fernandes: I do believe at the last meeting we came up with a solution to make sure he gets his numbers in time but let's make sure that goes into effect next year because I think we've talked about this throughout the years. Who is supposed to make sure that that is going to happen? Is it supposed to be the Board of Selectmen's meeting? I can't,

Mr. Alves: I think we discussed that, I can do what I normally do in September, try to get everybody around but it would be beneficial to you guys to call the people that need time to enter their numbers and kind of circle back with them. Where are you, what do you need? You know, there's not many people enter data in there but,

Mr. Rosa: Would it be helpful if we got it before September?

Mr. Alves: Um, I think the budget proceeding is tap into it a little bit but just be proactive you know, but there's no magic number either. You got to understand the magic date is after the Town meeting in November that's when we can start getting sense of the numbers once we enter them on the gateway, so you know what they were looking for other then be proactive and get it in earlier.

Mrs. Fernandes: Well maybe Ellie can put in, you know today is November 19th, we figured maybe the end of October? Is that a good time maybe? I mean we can be flexible but,

Mr. Alves: Same time as this year, absolutely.

Ms. Villano: This information has been in, as far as the Town departments,

Mr. Debarge: One second, Kim.

Ms. Collins: I have a question, I mean free cash has been certified for weeks, all of the information has been in the system so is it you have been waiting for?

Mr. Goncalves: The sewer department.

Mr. Alves: The sewer rate has to go in there.

Ms. Collins: Okay.

Mr. Alves: So it just coincided that our meetings were right on the same date.....you know my data wasn't approved by that date either. So, I can submit it but unless it's approved by DOR you can sit around here and talk circles all day. Until that number is approved, nothing gets populated to make sense of what's going in there, you know. So, there's a couple of steps that need to happen before you know, but I think we are focusing on the wrong thing here. The process is fine, there's about 60 towns that got their tax rate out of 350 so there's nothing wrong with what happens here. Even if we postpone a meeting it's the end result and how do we get there is what I'm focusing on, you know having $11,000 left at the levy It's not a good place to be in. It means we spent too much money. So that's what we have to focus on, not when we have a meeting, when the work's done, the work has always been completed on time and gets approved. Let's focus on the bigger picture, how do we fix our budget going from this year to next year so that we are not in the same place. That's the bigger picture of me not these little squabbles that we seem to,

Mr. Rosa: Joe, that's a valid point but I think the only point Manny was trying to make and correct me if I'm wrong, is that he wanted to have this one or two days in advance. So, even if nothing changes would it be detrimental if we scheduled this meeting, to allow you guys a few days, to next week? Would that have been detrimental to anybody?

Mr. Goncalves: That could have been a problem because if there was an issue that did come up and we went past the end of the month we wouldn't get tax bills out on time.

Mr. Silva: Could possibly.

Mr. Alves: No, that wouldn't have been an issue, with the tax bills.

Mr. Rosa: So, all I'm saying is if there is a delay next year and then they want it a few days in advance if we need to delay the meeting by a few days or a week then let's just do that, if it's not going to affect anything. Just for you guys the ability to have this in advance.

Mr. Debarge: That's kind of what we talked about the last time.

Mr. Alves: Last time, I was here about a month ago and we talked for a good hour. We had a resolution, we came up with a good strategy.

Mr. Rosa: Let's keep that in mind going forward then I guess.

Mr. Alves: Yeah, I mean it's tight, I mean these numbers come in, the dates are tight, you know. Sometimes you don't get as much time to prepare as you like. Hey if I had this, you would have this last week, it just didn't come together you know, but I don't think it's an issue at all.

Mr. Debarge: Does any other Board member have questions or comments?

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: Regarding what was spoken about up until now?

Mr. Rosa: Yeah, or anything.

Mr. Debarge: Moving on from this issue, but about anything,

Mrs. Fernandes: If I may?

Mr. Debarge: Please.

Mrs. Fernandes: For the residents that are listening, could you maybe explain what would happen if we went to a split tax rate versus not going to a split tax rate.

Mr. Rosa: Joe you want to take that?

Mr. Alves: Well if you look at the tables down below it shows you the dollar amount percentage and the actual dollar amount change. So, on table 2 you have the first line is $20.62 if it we were to shift 5% over to residential that would cause a $669 increase out of every commercial tax bill and it progresses from there. If you go to $20.08 in the residential, it bumps up commercial to $22.68 which is 10%, that equates to $530, I think those numbers are flipped. So, the table progresses that way. The lower you go on the residential, the higher the shift is.

Mr. Rosa: Are you guys following?

Mr. Alves: Essentially the Board can pick a shift, there's no one shift. You guys can kind of examine it and see what it would do.

Mr. Goncalves: Mr. Chairman. What, for instance, on a 5% shift what would that mean to the average homeowner in savings?

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:36
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Alves: A tax change for the homeowner would be about $298 and commercially that gets put on them, about $669 increase for them. So, you are taking from one class and adding it to the other.

Mrs. Fernandes: It would be a $298 reduction to the homeowner?

Mr. Rosa: I think it's right here Joe, the next line down. $62, so it would be a $62 savings for the homeowner and $530 increase to the commercial owner.

Mr. Debarge: Wow that's a big difference.

Mr. Rosa: And if you go 10 or 15% you can see how that exponentially grows.

Mr. Debarge: Yup.

Mrs. Fernandes: Yup.

Mr. Alves: The commercial tax base is much smaller then the rest of the Town. We're 86% residential, even our commercial base, there's one big entity that absorbs a lot of the value which is Eversource, so you can look at it that way. If we do shift most of that, the biggest entity that is going to get penalized will be Eversource, there's no doubt about it but can also the rest of the Town absorb that shift is the question. The businesses in Town is really what we are talking about.

Mrs. Fernandes: Well, that's going to be, I say this and last year I said this, Longmeadow tried this and a year later they are reverting back because they saw the impact. A lot of the businesses moved to East Longmeadow so while people think they are going to save $62, they are probably going to actually pay more because if you lose businesses you are not collecting those taxes.

Mr. Alves: Exactly. As Manny eluded the last couple of years when you do this that money will eventually not come in because businesses are leaving, and it will come back down anyways.

Mr. Goncalves: Not expand it.

Mr. Rosa: So, yeah that's a good point your making Carmina but this assumes the businesses stay the same and no one leaves. So, if someone leaves that....is going to even be greater.

Mrs. Fernandes: So, the savings to the residents is very little when you compare the loss and loss to the residents eventually. I say this every year, you know we need to look at this every year because maybe at some point we have a lot more businesses then we can consider this, but I think we are still at the point that it doesn't make sense to me to have a split tax rate but that's my opinion. I don't know what my colleagues think.

Mr. Goncalves: Oh, I agree 100%, I am absolutely of the mindset that businesses are coming here because there is a big difference settling a business here or settling in Chicopee or Springfield and I think the only way we are going to keep the rates down, especially with the current spending, is to get some business in to off-set without putting the stress on the services. No question.

Mr. Debarge: We have more revenue coming in over the next couple of years. It's obvious by what you see on Center Street. We have solar projects that are going to be producing revenue for us. We have WestMass that is going to be producing more revenue for us in the years to come. If this can be revisited, I agree with my colleagues that it should be revisited in the future, but obviously this huge difference in number does not show that it is a positive thing in my opinion. What I would like to break down a little bit for everybody is the actual $.80 and I understand Manny's point about the $.80 being actually the $298 and different for some people depending on their rating for their property. But to understand the breakdown of the tax, $.18 of this $.80 is our actually operating base, $.03 of this $.80 is from the old debt, which comes from the middle school and the high school and the rest of that $.80, the $.59 comes from the new middle school, I'm sorry the new elementary school and the senior center, the debt excluded money. So, the operating budget itself being $.18 is a pretty impressive thing for where we are, for our services that we offer and the job that our Town has been doing. Our Town Accountant, our departments, everybody and I want to get that point across. I know our taxes have been going up every year and we have refrained from using money in Free Cash to knock that done because we are building our stabilization fund, which is vital, vital to our future. I need to stress that; how vital it is to build that fund for our future. So, that $.59 for the debt excluded money for our two projects is what is building this, our taxes and it was voted on by everyone who showed up at the ballot,

so I just want everybody to understand that. I do have a question as well. We are working as hard as we can on options for working on the taxes, our taxes and the tax rate. Options for trash, we are working on other ways to bring in revenue, things like that, whether it comes in the future, close future or more distance future, I want to ask about abatements. Obviously, our seniors are hit the hardest with taxes and especially seniors with single income. Has there ever been a question for the abatement single senior with a single income or anything like that?

Mr. Alves: We have a couple of exemptions for the seniors, which is the senior work off abatement through the Selectmen's office.

Mr. Debarge: Yeah, I know that.

Mr. Alves: And an over 70 senior exemption as well.

Mr. Debarge: Over 70?

Mr. Alves: 70 is what we have. So, if you financially qualify you can get $400 off your taxes.

Mr. Debarge: Oh, okay.

Mr. Alves: But you have to financially qualify. Now you can up the requirements on that. Right now, they are relatively low so if you have a little too much money as a senior you don't qualify for this exemption. It's really bare-bones to qualify for it. We have quite a few, you know so we have that pipeline for them. There are other options out there that we can explore, and the Board of Selectmen would need to adopt going forward.

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

Mr. Alves: We can certainly bring some to your table if you want to adopt some. I know there might be a widow exemption out there. There're a few other ones there that might help but ultimately, it's going to end up on your table. So, we can certainly suggest some of these, you know but at the end of the day it's this Board that will decide.

Mr. Debarge: Okay, thanks Joe.

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Silva:

Mr. Silva: I suggest we have the Assessor's look at the exemptions that are by legislation the Town's exemptions are actually very low. If you look at the exemptions that we do have versus other communities, you know in my community, they are extremely low. Both on the parameters and the actual benefit that they get, $400 I think that was 30 years ago for Pete's sake. But there are significant increases now and every year legislation adopts a change that you can stay abreast of it, but it does have to go into Town meeting and get it changed. So, that's something that should be considered and looked at and maybe bring it up to what it should be.

Mr. Debarge: Is that a motion?

Mrs. Fernandes: Second.

Mr. Silva: We don't need a motion to have them,

Mr. Rosa: Well I think he's asking for your point of view.

Mr. Silva: Well, if you'd like a motion, I certainly could but,

Mr. Debarge: I'd love it.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:3
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Motioned by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to have the Assessor's office collect the data reflecting changes for elderly exemptions that are available to us so that we can propose them at the Town or Special meeting, either one. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. Alves: Now if I might just, going back to what you were saying about moving forward to, one thing that we used to do, since we are so close to our levy is be more diligent in spending. I know I say this every year, but one tool we used to have was the Board of Selectmen wouldn't let every article, financial kind of just trickle in to the Town meeting and that's something we have gotten away from over the last decade and it's something we need to revisit since it's so tight these days. I'm not saying it's right or

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:36
TOWN OF LUDLOW

wrong, I just think it's a great step for this Board to grab a hold of the Town that way or else they are going to bypass this Board as often as they can, and I don't think it's right either. You guys are here to make those decisions and I would support if you guys would push for that agenda going forward. Because many times you get to Town meeting and these people, they are opening their packets, they are not reading it, so it's a very flexible environment in there, you know. So, I think if you guys, ahead a time, if the Board really analyzes it and doesn't just let everything go by, it put us in a better position going forward as well. Again, just a suggestion.

Mr. Debarge: We have talked about that a number of times.

Mrs. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Mrs. Fernandes.

Mrs. Fernandes: I know taxes, property taxes are everybody's concern. I wish more residents were here because they certainly like to voice their opinion on Facebook and everything else, but when it counts how many people do we have here? We have the Board, there's not one resident here except the Board members that are also here as resident's, you know. It kind of saddens me that, you know increasing taxes are there, oh I'm sorry I didn't see you, oh we have two residents, I'm sorry. I thought you were the Board. And we have a business, so we have 3 people representing our community with the Board members as well for such an important meeting and this is upsetting to me because then when the taxes go up and they're, the bill comes in, they come in with the pitchforks. Well we need you guys here, so we can hear what you want to do. We are doing, I am telling you I have been on this Board for a few years, we have done amazing things with the monies that we have. The Town, it's like we can just say oh well we are short here let's just increase the prices here. The taxes are it, primarily. I mean we have economic development but primarily when we don't have enough money, the taxes are it. We can cut services, but we have tried to refrain from doing that because when we cut services it is an increase in tax right because if the seniors don't get their services, if whoever doesn't get their services that's an increase at the same time. So, we have done amazing things with trying to maintain our taxes as low as possible and an economy that everything keeps rising and trying to do the best we can with the amount of monies that we have. Now we have these projects that people voted for that I'm in agreement with because right now I think we need these buildings and right now the interest rates are so low that we will never have an opportunity to borrow like we have now. Unfortunately, that borrowing increases our taxes by, as my colleague here said about $.79,

Mr. Debarge: $.59

Mrs. Fernandes: $.59, I'm sorry, $.59 for this year, that's huge. But you understand that that's a future investment. That's something that we're are looking at as it's going to reduce our cost because once we have a functioning senior center we don't have to be dishing out monies to repair old heating systems, to do this, to do that. The same thing with the school so hopefully we will get our return on our investment on that and especially because we are getting a low interest rate. It effects our taxes unfortunately that's what it is. When you look at what our tax rate is in comparison to other communities like ours, ours are right now at $19.82, it's going to go up to $20.62 but then you compare it to East Longmeadow, $20.55, you compare it to Wilbraham, right next door $21.80, Palmer which has a lot of lower services than we do $20.70. So, we are still lower than a lot of our neighboring communities, yet we probably offer one of the best services in the area. You know your trash is still somewhat free, we have, if you are a resident, you can dump your trash locally. There're all these things that we are saving you money on and we are trying to do our best to find other ways, but you have to understand that we're, we only have what we have to work with. So, and we have been doing a phenomenal job, I think because there were year's when the taxes would be like this, your taxes would go up and then suddenly they would go down and then they would go up again and you couldn't budget yourself. You know, yes you had a great big tax savings but then the next year you know, you can't budget for it because you didn't know where the tax rate was going. We have been trying to make that tax rate steady all along so people, residents can project their costs and I think that we have done that. You know we have investments that are coming in and that is why our tax rate is high. So, thank you.

Mr. Rosenblum: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Rosenblum.

Mr. Rosenblum: Um, it's almost a be careful what you wish for type of scenario by saying, I mean I look at it from both sides. Obviously, I'm a home owner you know, and I also know people who own

businesses. So, if you look at it and you basically mentioned the point that I was going to discuss is pretty much is that if we did a split tax rate we are going to maybe push businesses out of town which adversely comes back on the homeowner anyways. But, also we knew this was coming with the schools and in the same sense you kind of even knew the writing was on wall when we were using Free Cash to offset our tax rate to the point where you know that hey we are a zero, we are at one, we are at these low numbers, there is no way to sustain that, to the point that's going to jump, it's going to jump. You know, I look at it from both sides, I always try to look at things, whenever I do things when it's even at work, it's looking at it as the consumer. Obviously, do I see that my bill is going to go up, yeah. I pretty much fall into that average number there, but I do see the fact that when you look at these tax rates that Mrs. Fernandes is talking about with East Longmeadow, Palmer, Wilbraham, Longmeadow, they don't even offer close to the services that we have. So, again do we cut those services to save our tax rate, to save your tax money, I don't think you can do that. Um, at this point I don't see it as something we go ahead with a split tax rate. Is it something maybe in the future, I mean I know that we have grown business-wise in the past 30 years. I have talked to a couple different people to get facts, you know I have only been in Town 20 years. So, trying to learn more of what has happened in the past. Have we grown, yes. We stayed somewhat flat in our population, but we are a busier town. As the Chairman was saying we do have future revenues coming in once the businesses are brought in. But, I think that to go ahead and raise that tax, to change the tax rate a little bit, you are going to discourage some people to come in and were we have been talking about doing business and getting business in Town because we are, you know we are getting to a point how much more residential can we stuff into the Town of Ludlow? So, it's tough, I look at it at both sides and it's a hard decision because everyone wants to run on the fact that cutting taxes for the residential person and we know in general $.59 was coming, we knew this was coming and we are going to be doing it for thirty years with the school. So, I mean that's where I say, and I look at $.80 and 4%, 4% is actually one of lower tax hikes in the last four years, except for one year at two-something but otherwise where do you go?

Mr. Alves: That $.18 operating budget is really impressive if you really look at the numbers.

Mrs. Fernandes: Yeah. Yes, it is.

Mr. Alves: It's been good work by this Board and other Board's to bring that number like that but the.....is what is killing us there's no doubt.

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman just one more comment if I could.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Silva.

Mr. Silva: To both of your points, let's not stress on tax rates. They really, again, they really don't show the big picture. The tax rate in Truro is, I believe $6.08. That doesn't reflect what the average tax bill is.

Mr. Debarge: Where?

Mr. Silva: Truro, towards the Cape, all of them they are really low,

Mr. Debarge: Oh yeah, on the Cape they are.

Mr. Silva: The lowest the other day,

All talking over each other.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Silva: Something like that, so if you are going to look at the rates, it doesn't reflect what the picture is. The picture is in the average tax bill, where is it, where is it going and quite honestly where our average is going to go, it's going to above a lot of the communities that we were below the average.

Mr. Debarge: What's a house cost in Truro?

Mr. Silva: That's the picture.

Mr. Rosenblum: That's the point.

Mr. Silva: And they get a lot of incomes from tax revenues from other things so by just looking at the rate doesn't really give you a true picture.

Mrs. Fernandes: Yeah, you got to look at everything, including like we were talking about, the values of the homes but then you don't want your home values to be so low that you are selling them at the bottom line. It's one of those, unfortunately it's a balancing act.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Goncalves: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Alright, Mr. Goncalves.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, just really quickly and I think just to finish on the Truro conversation um, 42% of our budget is the school department. Those Truro's and places on the Cape have regionalized schools so their school budgets are nearly nothing at all. Going back to what you said Mr. Alves about the money and how we are spending, I would also put a little bit of the responsibility on the Town Meeting Members. We have precincts that they can't fill seats and I was blown away at this Town Meeting where we passed a $76 million-dollar budget in less than 10 minutes. It took five times longer to read the article then it did to vote on it and there was one question and it was a typo question by Mr. Carvalho, I believe and there was a number that was transposed. That was the only question on $76 million dollars of spending. So, those people, the representatives that come to Town Meeting, they also maybe got to get a little more involved and put a little bit of pressure on where the spending is coming from and ask more questions. We can only do so much here. We rely also on the Finance Committee to give us some guidance. With that in mind I'm okay, I'm ready to go.

Mr. Debarge: Okay. Any questions from our audience?

Resident: Marion.... actually, maiden name Fernandes, I was born right here in Ludlow. I'm not only from The East of the River Chamber but I'm also from Encompass. So, I know that the differences and both sides of the story but from a business point of view, you have to understand that we don't use a lot of the services, like the schools or the senior center, or you know, the fire, although I suppose Encompass is probably one of the ones that does use the ambulance service but a lot of the other business they don't really use the other services that are offered. So, that's a burden on us, right now we do give back, we offer employment to the Town. We also bring in, I think we just you know sponsored the fire golf tournament. So, with the prices going up, the tax going up, if that is an option you have to understand that the money that we give back to the Town is going to be less. You know we've got that, now the new paid family leave act, you know the average rate of pay going up, everything has to increase for the businesses, so we would probably give back less to the community if the tax rate was to split. I want to thank you for you know for having the tax rate not split as of yet. I do appreciate that and born and raised here, my sister actually just purchased a house in Ludlow because of the community that it is. So, there are people, there are businesses willing to stay, there are people moving back. You want to make sure you keep it that way. Thank you.

Mr. Debarge: Thank you. Do we need a motion for,

Mrs. Fernandes: We have to vote.

Move by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to keep the residential factor at one. Vote 5-0, all in favor.

Mr. Alves: The next motion is the small residential exemption and again that's more of a shifting the burden over the higher-end homes. We probably have around 900 homes that would qualify for this, you would be shifting about half million dollars, if we adopt this, to the higher value residential which again it's unfair that they would have to share the value of lower end homes because of this exemption. So, um I think the Board usually goes against this as well.

Mr. Rosa: Yeah.

Mr. Alves: They recommend not to vote for the residential exemption.

Mrs. Fernandes: Can you explain to the listeners what that residential exemption is?

Mr. Alves: Yeah, the explanation is right here so I can go through this. The Selectmen or Mayor, with approval, might grant residential exemption to all Class I residential properties that are principal residents of the tax payer on January, for the amount the exemption may not exceed 20% of the average accessed value of all Class I residential properties. Then it goes on how it calculates the exemption, the Assessor first determines the average assessed value of residential, the adoptive percentage is applied to the amount and the assessed valuation of each residential parcel that is domicile of tax payers is then reduced by that amount.

Mr. Debarge: Explain this to me one more time Joe.

Mr. Alves: So, we would take 20% of any home that's below $100,000. So, that tax value that generates from that value would be shifted to the more expensive homes to pay that burden. This is good for Nantucket, I think is one of the few that has this, since their home values are so compared to some of the smaller residentials. Again, shifting a tax burden from one class to another and this one is actually the same class you are just putting it on the higher value home.

Mr. Goncalves: Like a luxury tax.

Mr. Rosa: Correct.

Mr. Alves: Without sugar coating it, yes.

Mr. Rosa: It's not a luxury tax but, yeah.

Mrs. Fernandes: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Mrs. Fernandes.

Mrs. Fernandes: While I know we want, the seniors definitely, I think we need to do something about the seniors. They don't have the ability to increase their income you know. They are on a downward spiral, if we can do something,

Mr. Debarge: About the abatements, yeah.

Mrs. Fernandes: Yeah, but this residential exemption in our community, maybe in a Truro or Cape Cod where you have millionaires that move in but in our community where a lot of these people that have the higher end homes have worked really hard to get there. So, they are doing the American dream and now we are going to punish them by charging them more taxes. Moreover, I don't know how many homes that we have that are less than $100,000 these days.

Mr. Alves: We have more than you think.

Mr. Rosa: About 900 he said.

Mr. Alves: Yeah, close to 900.

Mrs. Fernandes: Really?

Mr. Silva: Let me explain that, it's not less the $100,000 the shift is not at $100,000, it's a lot more than that. I think the 900 he's talking about might be a little low.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Alves: Right, they're rough numbers just to have a picture of what would happen,

Mr. Silva: How many residents do we have?

Mr. Alves: The numbers that were coming out, there were about 5,000 properties that would qualify.

Mr. Silva: You got to have at least, I got to say just off the top of my head, you got to have at least 2,000 homes that would have a reduction. Now mind you, some will be very small because as you get closer to the breaking point they're less, the lower you go, the more benefit you have. So, it's that's my calculation anyway.

Mr. Rosa: What you are doing is you are unfairly shifting someone's burden because their property is worth a little bit less to someone's property that's worth a little bit more and that person is carrying more of the burden, the tax burden which is unfair.

Mr. Debarge: But do you, you don't necessarily know the person's income. It's just based on their property, correct?

Mr. Rosa: Correct, correct.

Mr. Alves: Residency and value, yes.

Mr. Debarge: So, they could be,

Mr. Rosa: Millionaires.

Mr. Debarge: They could be doctors just living in a small property.

Mr. Alves: Absolutely. Sure, sure.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

Mr. Goncalves: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Did you have a motion or,

Mrs. Fernandes: That would be my motion that we do not, do we have to do a motion?

Mr. Alves: Yes, yes you do.

Mrs. Fernandes: Oh, okay.

Motioned by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Goncalves not to apply the residential exemption to our Town at this time. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. Goncalves: Small commercial exemptions is the same thing as residential properties, is that it?

Mr. Rosa: Yes, exactly.

Mr. Silva: I will just explain if you want unless Joe wants to.

Mr. Alves: No, no please.

Mr. Silva: Small commercial is given actually commercial properties a little bit of a benefit to stay in the community. It is kind of the reverse what we would do by shifting some of the burden. Any commercial property that is under $1 million, that has less than 10 employees would get a 10% reduction. To pay for this the higher end commercial properties would be bearing the burden for giving them the exemption. Basically, the same as the residential does only qualifications are a little different.

Mr. Debarge: Okay. So, no on that, right?

Mr. Rosa: That's our recommendation.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to take no action on small commercial exemption. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. Alves: So, I need one more thing from the Board. I need the signatures on line, three out of five. So, whenever you guys want to go on there it's the it's the.....5 you need to sign. You have a login and a password I believe, if not you can come see Ellie or I, we can get something for you.

Mr. Debarge: Okay.

Mr. Silva: Just in case you can't get them online, you can have the form signed and download it and send it in.

Mr. Alves: I have one here, I can leave with you guys.

Mr. Silva: In case you can't get it signed.

Mr. Rosa: It may be easier for the Board.

Mr. Alves: They have been kicking some, I've been told they kicked some back, signatures.

Mr. Silva: I just know you can download them.

Mr. Alves: I will leave one with Ellie. I will come back with it.

Mr. Silva: Now those, before you leave, those numbers that you have on there are done. There are no changes coming because once you make a change that.....

Mr. Alves: Yeah, no everything is locked up, everything has been submitted so it's locked up so it's not going to be, this is it. So, it's really just about this meeting and getting the signatures in, nothing will change.

Mrs. Fernandes: While he's still here can I make a comment? Mr. Silva you always do pummel him here, when he's at these meetings.

Mr. Silva: Well, it's the same question every year though.

Mrs. Fernandes: Now that your daughter is on this Board though,

Mr. Silva: She'll learn.

Mrs. Fernandes: maybe you can pummel her and train her.

Mr. Alves: You know a little banter is fine, what I tell people when they ask me about it, what that does is it makes you better, it makes you ready to have the answer and really be ready. You know. It's like being on the soccer field and somebody is really pushing you and you have to work hard to get something it,

Mr. Rosa: So, he's thanking you is what he's doing. He's thanking you indirectly.

Mr. Silva: Listen and last year was little different and it was on the Solar and the Solar I saw was back on. That was one of the changes that I was going to question, where that change is. There was another question where the actual I believe commercial went up significantly and yet the number came down so I was kind of wondering what, and the other question I had is commercial went up exactly the same as residential?

Mr. Alves: That's where it came in, yeah.

Mr. Silva: That usually doesn't happen. Was it a 10% across the board that you, the adjustments were made.

Mr. Alves: No, that's just how it worked out, the numbers worked out to be pretty close.

Mr. Silva: .....was kind of,

Mr. Alves: Yeah and again this gets approved by DOR before it gets even any further, so you know.

Mr. Silva: You and I know that DOR is just there to oversee. That's all they are.

Mrs. Fernandes: Again, maybe you can train your daughter.

Mr. Silva: I told her a long time ago that it was a great experience to get into.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to close the hearing at 6:49 p.m. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Visitations:

Interviews – Debbie Johnson 7:30:

Mr. Debarge: Could you please state your name and where you are from for the record please? Your address.

Ms. Johnson: Oh, Debbie Johnson, I live at 142 Cady Street in Ludlow.

Mr. Debarge: And you are here for the open position for the,

Ms. Johnson: Council on Aging.

Mr. Debarge: Yes.

Mr. Kucinic: Frank Kucinic, 483 Lyon Street Chairman, Council on Aging.

Mr. Debarge: Hi Frank.

Mr. Kucinic: Hi, howdy.

Mr. Debarge: So, what would you like to say.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Ms. Johnson: I just, I saw that the position was open, and I have always been interested in the council and I thought it would be good for me to try and get on the council. I have been with the Senior Center now over 20 years and I would like to see it grow and I feel being on the council I could bring a lot of good ideas into the council to see if we can do a lot more with what the Senior Center is now. We are moving into the new building within a year hopefully. I see big and better going on for the center and I would like to be a part of it.

Mr. Debarge: I was going to ask if you had anything to do with the seniors?

Ms. Johnson: Just for a couple of years, I have only been there a couple of years. No, but because of my position I do see a lot of seniors of all the different ages. I mean, I have dealt with seniors from the age of 60 to the age of 90 so you kind of get a feel of what they are looking for and what they do need. So, I felt that would be a good asset to being on the council.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Mr. Debarge: Does anyone have any questions?

Mr. Silva: Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Debarge: Mr. Silva.

Mr. Silva: No questions really. Evidently you know what the council is all about.

Ms. Johnson: Yes.

Mr. Silva: It's wonderful that you are stepping up and you're in.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you Manny.

Mr. Debarge: I'm glad you decided that Manny.

Mr. Goncalves: Mr. Chairman, very quickly. I know that we have spoken before on the phone and I know people, John Garcia and others and they have nothing but good things to say about you.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you.

Mr. Goncalves: We are very fortunate that you are stepping up. Thank you.

Ms. Johnson: I will take some of the credit, but I won't take all of the credit. I feel that all of us at the Senior Center work as a great team and we have the seniors as the utmost important thing that we are dealing with.

Mr. Goncalves: Yeah, I think the seniors are lucky in this Town, they have a great group.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mrs. Fernandes: I want to thank you for stepping up and volunteering. We were talking about, you know, we need volunteers and I really appreciate such a qualified candidate is stepping up to do this,

Ms. Johnson: Oh, thank you.

Mrs. Fernandes: and I don't know what he has to say about you but if he has a recommendation there, it comes very well recommended so.

Mr. Kucinic: Could not have asked for a better person to take over.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you.

Mr. Rosenblum: Oh, as I had said in my closing remarks, it's great to see people step up and their passionate about what they want to do. You know, I have been over to the Senior Center many times. I'm seeing where it's at now and I'm excited to see where it is in a year when we have that Thanksgiving dinner that day. I know that's Jody, shoot for it.

Ms. Johnson: We're trying.

Mr. Rosenblum: But no, I thank you for stepping up.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you, I appreciate it.

Mr. Debarge: Well I have known you for a long time.

Ms. Johnson: Yes, you have.

Mr. Debarge: I have nothing at all bad to say about you, I think you're the best.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you Derek.

Mr. Debarge: I think you would be a great asset.

Ms. Johnson: Thank you very much.

Mr. Debarge: Anyone have a motion?

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to accept Debbie Johnson and appoint her to Council on Aging. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Correspondence:

265. Benta Alves – requesting to be appointed as a Democratic poll worker. Democratic Town Committee Chairman recommends appointment.

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to appoint Benta Alves as a Democratic poll worker. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

266. Attorney Thomas Rooke- petition for the transfer of an All Alcoholic Beverage License from Rodrigues, Inc. to d/b/a Europa Café to Vanished Valley, Inc. d/b/a Vanished Valley Brewing. Board to schedule Public Hearing.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to schedule a Public Hearing for item #266. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

267. James Casagranda – requesting the Town to fix the catch basin in front on his house.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to request the DPW to review and fix if they can. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

268. Steven Van Wormer, Project Manager, Omni Environmental Group – informing the Board that an Immediate Response Action (IRA) Completion and Permanent Solution Statement (PSS) with No Conditions has been submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection (MassDEP) for 71 Fairway Drive, Ludlow.

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to file. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

269. Board of Directors, Westfield Bank – invitation to their annual Holiday Cocktail Reception on Tuesday, December 10, 2019 at the Castle of Knights, 1599 Memorial Drive, Chicopee, MA between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. – RSVP is due by Friday, November 29, 2019.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum, seconded by Mr. Silva to file. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

270. Michael N. Brennan, Lieutenant – requesting permission from the Board to use the facilities located at the Ludlow High School, to include the parking lots, high school sporting fields, cross country course, bathrooms and concession building for the 5th Annual Sgt. Joshua D. Desforges Walk/Run Challenge on Saturday, May 9, 2020.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2019 NOV 18 P 1:07
CITY/TOWN OF LUDLOW

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to approve Lt. Michael Brennan's request to use the facilities at Ludlow High School to include the parking lots, sporting fields, cross country course, bathrooms and concessions building for the 5th Annual Sgt. Joshua D. Desforges Walk/Run Challenge on Saturday, May 9, 2020. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

271. Pablo P. Madera, Chief of Police – informing the Board of his retirement as of January 24, 2020.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to accept Chief Pablo Madera's retirement on January 24, 2020 and to send a thank you card to him and his family. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Mr. Debarge explained that choosing an assessment center for the hiring process of a new Chief and having it in place before his retirement would be the best decision. The Board can choose the tests that the assessment center puts in place. The LPD used the assessment center when Chief Madera was hired.

Ellie explained that the Board needs to contact Carrie in Human Resources to request an assessment. It usually takes two days for the assessment center to meet with all of the candidates and to research and write a report on it. The Board can pick how many scenarios they would like and what types of scenarios. The assessment members are usually previous Police Chiefs and it costs approximately $6,000. For 4 candidates and then any additional candidates will cost additional money.

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to request HR Director to contact Civil Service and request an assessment for the position of Police Chief. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

272. Gloria Faria, Committee Chair, Ludlow Rotarian – requesting permission to hold their annual "Toys for Tots" Christmas Event on Sunday, December 15th. Also, requesting a police presence as in the past years.

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Silva to approve the request of Ms. Faria's request to hold the Ludlow Rotary's annual "Toys for Tots" Christmas Event on Sunday, December 15th at 4 p.m. and also to provide police presence as we have in the past years. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:37
TOWN OF LUDLOW

Unfinished Business:

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign the Licensing Authority Certification for change of manager for Bill's Garden, LLC for reconsideration due to original CORI form not being notarized. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to sign the contract between Kim Collins, Town Accountant and the Town of Ludlow. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Moved by Mrs. Fernandes, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to approve and sign the IBPO, Local 374 Police Patrolman's Collective Bargaining Agreement. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to approve and sign the Selectmen Meeting Minutes of August 6, 2019 where all members were present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to approve and sign the Executive Session Meeting Minutes from the October 1, 2019 meeting where all members were present. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

New Business:

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

Closing Comments:

Mr. Goncalves: Congratulated the Ludlow High boys' soccer team on a great season even though they lost a tough game, they made Ludlow proud. Good luck next year to them.

Mr. Silva: Wishing the Chief the best in his retirement.

Mrs. Fernandes: Stated that she is a member of the local community mitigation advisory committee for Region B for the Mass Gaming Commission and at the meeting today she was told that the state is getting a lot of money from these casinos. Including $35 million from a fine against Wynn Development. Last year the committee decided that the MGM funds that go into the mitigation were going to be separated at $5 mil for the Western part of the state and $7 mil for the Eastern part. Anyone can request a grant to help businesses with the impact of the casino. These funds have been used to train staff because of certain jobs that have been lost to the casino, such as banks, funds have been given to the local community colleges to help train staff, funds have been used for transportation issues, such as valet services or shuttles from other areas. The funds have also been used to relocate and find a lease for the wellness center with the Sheriff's office. So, funds have been used in a very responsible way.

For the mitigation we get 6.5% of all the gaming taxes and the state gets 25% on the tax of all gross revenues and of that 9.5% will go into economic development for the state. The legislature decides how the 9.5% gets spent, although we can give them ideas. For example, Northampton received a grant to promote tourism. The 9.5% is used to rejuvenate the areas to help with the casinos and the local businesses. We need economic development projects in order to help with keeping the taxes manageable. We don't want to cut services in our Town and we need more residents to come to the meetings or contact us. She also reminded everyone to come out for the Toy's for Tots on December 15th.

Mr. Rosenblum: He spoke about the openings on the different Boards and the opportunities to come to the meetings and voice your opinions. He also mentioned that the meetings are posted on the Town website and the Facebook page as well. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving and to drive safe and enjoy your family.

Ms. Villano: Answered a question from a resident regarding the solar fields on Holyoke Street. She explained that the Town has an agreement to purchase the electricity at a reduced rate for letting the

company use the land and then the Town is credited at a higher rate. There is an average savings of $45,000 applied towards the municipal buildings' electric bills. Over 20 years will be approximately $900,000. There is also approximately $150,000 in property taxes generated from the solar field as well.

Mr. Debarge: He reminded everyone that December 6th at 10 am is the ground breaking for the Senior Center if anyone wants to come out. He wished everyone a happy Thanksgiving.

Moved to adjourn by Mr. Rosenblum, seconded by Mr. Goncalves at 7:35 pm. Vote 5-0 all in favor.

Ludlow Board of Selectmen

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

RECEIVED
TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE
2020 MAR 18 P 3:17
TOWN OF LUDLOW