The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 7, 2020 began at 5:30 p.m. This meeting was held during the Covid-19 crisis by remote participation.

Members Present: Derek DeBarge, Chairman, Antonio Goncalves, Manuel Silva and William Rosenblum
Absent: Carmina Fernandes
First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Visitations:

5:30 - Justin Larivee, Building Commissioner – Building Commissioner/Facilities Manager position.

Justin Larivee, Building Commissioner and Carrie Ribeiro, HR to discuss the possibility of adding/funding the part-time building inspector back in to the FY21 budget as well as the addition of Facilities Manager to the Building Commissioner's duties.

Mr. Larivee explained that other communities have combined these positions as well and would allow the buildings in Town to be more closely monitored. The part-time building inspector would be a non-benefited, 19 hours/week position and there will not be extra office space or an additional vehicle for this position. The position would focus on weekly inspections. Beginning in the winter this would give a $32,000 revenue as well.

It would free up Mr. Larivee to do emergency repairs, contracts, small day-to-day maintenance, putting bid specs together and assisting Ellie with the process of big projects in the Town. Justin would be responsible for all buildings in Town, including the schools.

Mr. Goncalves asked about the $32,000 annual revenue beginning in the winter and how that would work?

Mr. Larivee explained that the construction side of things slows down right after Christmas through the end of February and the inspector would then be able to focus on multi-family inspections, which the Building Department is currently behind on. Getting these inspections done would result in approximately $32,000 in revenue based on inspection fees.

Mr. Larivee also explained that he would be in charge of renovations, elevator inspections, sprinklers and smoke detectors and would try to streamline it and get all the buildings on the same page. Currently almost every building uses a different company for these issues.

Mr. Goncalves wanted to know how many permits the Building Department does annually and if it has increased or decreased over the last few years. He would also like to know if he could get a report of those numbers.

Mr. Larivee stated that the number of residential permits has been fairly steady over the last three years with a lot of remodeling and single-family homes. The commercial projects are growing. He can and will get a report for the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Rosenblum asked what the compensation for this position would be?

Mr. Debarge explained that this position would pay $26,152.36 annually/$26.47 per hour, non-benefited.

Ms. Ribeiro asked if that compensation was comparable to other communities and where it came from?

Mr. Larivee explained that this was comparable to other communities, they usually pay between mid-twenties and mid-thirties for this part time position.

Ms. Ribeiro commented that usually there is a vetting process now that the classification & compensation has been adopted by the Board of Selectmen. However, she was not made aware of this position until March 10th and then the pandemic began which is making it difficult to get answers from

surrounding communities because a lot of employees are not in the office currently. South Hadley, Agawam and Longmeadow have not responded because of this pandemic. However, in speaking with Northampton, East Longmeadow, Palmer and Hadley, which are comparable to our Town, they do not have a combined position. These towns have a full time Facilities Manager, which is what Ms. Ribeiro believes Ludlow needs.

Ms. Ribeiro also brought up some concerns about this position of Building Commissioner/Facilities Manager because it would have to be a joint effort between the schools and the Town and reporting to two different people can be tricky. Also, the Town would want the schools to contribute to the salary of this position and they are not in a position to do this in FY21, therefore the Town would have to fund the entire salary. Lastly, it is not a good idea to create positions around a specific individual because if Mr. Larivee leaves this position in the future it would be very difficult to find someone to fill this position. Ms. Ribeiro also asked if this is going to be a contracted position with a typical three-year contract?

Mr. Silva agrees that the Town does need a full time Facilities Manager but due to the uncertain times currently, believes the Town should hold off on this.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees with Mr. Silva and Ms. Ribeiro that recruiting is going to be difficult for a position like that in the future and with the budget constraints and the pandemic we should wait on this. He would also like a three-year report for permits and revenue.

Mr. Debarge asked Ms. Ribeiro if the Town was to combine this position now and then Mr. Larivee left his position, could the Board then decide to split this position again such as Amherst has done.

Ms. Ribeiro commented that yes it could be split in the future but the reason that Amherst split theirs recently was due to the fact that it was too much work for one person.

Mr. Debarge commented that he likes the idea of a part-time inspector and combining Mr. Larivee's position to be Building Commissioner and Facilities Manager and believes it will help the Town right now. In the future the Town can split this position again if necessary.
Ms. Villano stated that she does not believe that Amherst is a good comparison to Ludlow. Ludlow's buildings are aging and at least 3 buildings will be coming offline in the next year or two. She also understands the budgetary constraints currently but this part-time inspector position has been in the works for several years and believes that it will not only pay for itself but also help pay for a small portion of the increase for the combined Building Commissioner/Facilities Manager's position. Over the last few years Ms. Villano has relied on Mr. Larivee's vast knowledge and often goes to him for decisions regarding the maintenance on buildings in Town. She has had to get bids from outside sources that were probably triple what she would have paid a Facilities Manager. Mr. Larivee's expertise has helped with a recent issue at the Police Station when the heater broke during a cold spell Mr. Larivee was able to get portable heaters from a generous company and Mr. Larivee helped facilitate getting the new heating system installed. Therefore, Ms. Villano believes these positions should move forward now with the understanding that the Facilities Manager may need to become a full-time position in the future.

Mr. Goncalves would like to have a contract for the combined position that Mr. Larivee would take over and if other towns have contracts for these types of positions?

Ms. Villano does not feel a contract is necessary.

Ms. Ribeiro agrees with Mr. Goncalves that there should be a contract for this position as it is a new position and Mr. Larivee would be on call and have a vehicle, etc. Ms. Ribeiro would need to research to see if any surrounding towns have contracts for these types of employees.

Mr. Debarge stated that Mr. Larivee has gone to the Finance Committee with this but they did not vote on it. A lot of questions and concerns came up during this conversation today and he is suggesting to table it for a month in order to HR to do their due diligence for the vetting process.

Ms. Ribeiro agrees that a month should be enough time for HR to work on this and would like a list of questions from the Board of Selectmen to have answered.

Board agrees to table this discussion for a month in order to give enough time to HR to answer all of the questions brought up.

Correspondence:

97. Carrie Ribeiro, Human Resources – request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to C.41, section 111F for a police officer for an injury on the job.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to allow Carrier Ribeiro to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to C. 41, section 111F for a police officer injured on the job. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

98. Melanson Heath, Auditors – copy of the Fiscal Year 2019 audit which consists of the representative letter, Management letter, Single Audit and Financial Report.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to table the Melanson Heath, Auditors letters and report and have them come in to discuss further. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Unfinished Business:

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum, seconded by Mr. Silva to postpone the Town Meeting until June 22, 2020. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Board discussed the COVID-19 crisis and updates. The Town Administrator requested that some staff be allowed to come back in to get some of the invoices paid or to work from home. There are approximately 30 Town employees home due to the pandemic. Currently there are 22 positive OVID-19 cases in town. Sheriff Nick Cocchi has opened a first responder recover home at the pre-release center. This is an 84-room facility for Doctors, Nurses, Police, Firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians, Correctional Professionals, US Military Members who have been diagnosed with COVID-19. They will be provided with hotel bedding and restaurant quality food at no charge. Governor Baker has announced that COVID-19 testing will be available for front line workers at gate 1 at the Big E. The next three weeks will be when this pandemic will spike and we would like residents to try and stay home as much as possible. Try not to bring your family with you to the grocery stores.

New Business:

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum for the Board to approve and sign the three seasonal liquor licenses for Ludlow Fish and Game Club, Ludlow Country Club and Gremio Luisitano Club Franklin Field as well as the Seasonal Renewal Certification form. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to open the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to include an article on the warrant for the upcoming Annual Town Meeting for COVID-19 funding as well as the OPEB re-adoption and the re-adoption of declaration of trust. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Board agreed to further discuss removal of articles at the next meeting, after more information is gathered from other departments.

Board agreed to continue weekly meetings for now unless there are not enough items on the agenda.

Board agreed to postpone the Memorial Day Parade to a date that the Veteran Service Agent will choose.

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. Rosenblum stresses that everyone needs to stay safe and try to keep your family at home when you are getting necessities. Stay positive and enjoy the time with your family.

Mr. Silva agreed with Mr. Rosenblum and also wanted to say Happy Easter and try to enjoy as much as possible.

Mr. Goncalves also agreed with Mr. Rosenblum and Mr. Silva and also wants to wish everyone a Happy Easter. Try to reach out to an elderly neighbor to see if they need anything when you go to the store. Stay safe!

Mr. Debarge stated how angry he is regarding the Holyoke Soldiers Home and what is happening there. There is a lot of corruption and lack of safety protocols. They knew weeks ago how bad the virus was and still discouraged use of PPE by their employees which resulted in numerous deaths and positive COVID-19 cases for both residents and employees and hopes that someone will be held responsible for this. He also wants to let everyone know to stay safe and healthy during this time.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to adjourn this meeting at 7:25 p.m., not return to open session. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Ludlow Board of Selectmen

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