The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 14, 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:

5:35 – Jeff Daley, Westmass Area Development Corporation – DIF Program (District Improvement Financing)

Mr. Debarge explained that the Board is discussing an issue with the road infrastructure project on Riverside Drive with Jeff Daley from Westmass Area Development Corporation. Also, the funding for a pump station and ways that the Town can get funding for this through the District Improvement Financing.

Mr. Daley is discussing a service that Westmass can provide to alleviate worries about financing some of the project. One way is called a District Improvement Financing which is when you create a new district and any new taxes generated in that district get earmarked to pay back the debt associated with any cost for public infrastructure. This project we are discussing is a finance move to finance a pump station on site if all goes well and it would be approximately $500,000 for the Town. This sets up an assurance to the community. Many surrounding communities are doing these DIF's. Just with the Mills, building 8 going online in a few years and the development of the Eastern part of the property, this could yield approximately $1.5 - $2.5 million dollars in new taxes. Mr. Daley has done at least 8-9 of these for the last company he worked for.

Mr. Goncalves would like Mr. Daley to explain how this came about and the reason why it's not part of the funding the Town has already received from the State. Also, wants to explain that the pump station will take that lower Eastern section and in the original plans we did not think we would need a pump station at that location.

Mr. Daley stated that the pump station would be put in within the park to support the public infrastructure on the Western half of the project on the back side right on Riverside Drive to pump up to State Street and tap into that infrastructure. The Eastern part is currently being managed by the pump station on First Avenue. Most of the properties are direct lines out to State Street but this would need to be built to support the pumping of everything up from Riverside Drive to State Street. Four or five years ago an engineering firm recommended a gravity fed system. However, when Wright Pierce started to look at elevations, they realized that a gravity fed system would not work and is now recommending a pump station. That is why it was not written in any of the original grants awarded from the State or Feds for the road construction project.

Mr. Debarge stated that after speaking with Sarah from Westmass, Wright Pierce and our DPW he is in agreement that a gravity fed system would not work for solids. Now the Town needs a way to finance this.
Mr. Silva would like a confirmation that this debt would be reimbursed and the tax payers would not be burdened for this project?

Mr. Daley essentially it would be reimbursed from the DIF. The Town would either self-fund it or go out and get debt for it and when the new development happens, they would pay their taxes as normal, there is not associated fees or tax increases for anyone but because there is new taxes generated on the new development this would go towards paying back this debt.

Mr. Debarge wanted to verify if we would even have to use this DIF if the project came in under budget.

Mr. Daley confirmed that the Town may not have to use this money but he would still recommend that the Town create the DIF district, create the program at the Town Meeting this year and authorize to spend up to $500,000 and then the money would be in place if needed and the Town would not have to

run around last minute trying to get it approved. This would be the last monies Westmass would look at for this project.

Mr. Silva asked if the Town would need to apply for this DIF and have a Manager oversee it and wanted to know what happens if the powers that be do not allow this to move forward?

Mr. Daley explained that the DIF no longer needs to be applied for, in 2016 the power was given back to the cities and towns to implement it. The only thing the Town would need to do is to make sure that the Treasurer or Tax Collector processing the bills is aware that any new money generated by the Mills is earmarked to pay that debt back. There is no State oversight or State Manager, it is a local only program. The baseline is what creates the district for example if it were the Mills then any time the value went up at the Mills, that money would be earmarked for the debt.

Mr. Goncalves asked if there are any upfront costs for this DIF project?

Mr. Daley explained that the only upfront cost would be $18,500 for Westmass to put together the entire project and to attend the annual meeting to answer any questions about the DIF program.

Ms. Villano explained that she will contact Town Counsel to determine if the DIF application needs to go out for quote. Depending on what Town Counsel informs Ms. Villano, she would have to either go to Finance to request the $18,500 or the Board can vote to use the money from the 40R project. The DIF district, the DIF program and the authorization to spend up to $500,000 would have to be put into an article for Town Meeting once the Board votes on it.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to appropriate funds, not to exceed $18,500 for the preparation of the DIF application. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to put an article on the Town Meeting in order to create the DIF district, create the DIF district program and authorize the Board of Selectmen to spend up to $500,000 for the purpose of developing and constructing a pump station on Riverside Drive. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Correspondence:

99. Verizon, petition for joint pole location – located on Fuller Street.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to schedule a hearing and invite Verizon and Eversource to come in to discuss. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

100. Verizon – petition for a pole location – located at Center Street.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to schedule a hearing and invite Verizon and Eversource to come in to discuss. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Unfinished Business:

Board discussed the COVID-19 crisis and updates. Mr. Debarge explained that there are approximately 36 new cases in Town currently. In the press release on Friday, Mr. Debarge encouraged residents to continue social distancing and also not to congregate on Cislak Drive, especially. On Saturday Mr. Debarge received a message from one of the residents on Cislak Drive around 6:30 and was told that there were 27 cars up there with 4-5 kids to a car. The message was not only in regards to the lack of social distancing but also about the cards speeding up the street. By the time the Police were called, there was upwards of 50 cars there and when the Police arrived, the cars dispersed. Mr. Debarge is pleading to parents, guardians and kids to please be responsible and do not go up to Cislak Drive and hang out there. There is a stay-at-home order for a reason and we do not want to pass this virus around more.

Mr. Goncalves also received phone calls regarding this situation on Cislak Drive and he echoes Mr. Debarge's concerns.

Mr. Silva also agreed with Mr. Goncalves and Mr. Debarge and asked if the Police could issue citations for this?

Ms. Villano explained that temporary "no parking" and "no loitering" signs will be going up in that neighborhood and the Police will be able to issue citations at that point.

Mr. Rosenblum asked the residents to think about other people, not just themselves during this pandemic.

New Business:

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva pursuant of Section 10a of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020 that the due date under Mass General Laws for the payment of taxes be moved from May 1 to June 1. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum in pursuant of Section 10a of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020 that the due date under Mass General Law 59 Section 59 for the Application of Exemptions be extended from May 1 to June 1. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to remove articles 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 and 34 from the Annual Town Meeting and article 5 from the Special Town Meeting and place them on the October Special Town Meeting. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to approve the contract amendment with Wright-Pierce for additional scope of services to include a possible pump station and authorize the Chairman to execute the contract. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

Board discussed employees who are designated as essential refusing to come to work. There was some discussion regarding furloughing those employees as well as speaking to the Town Counsel regarding whether or not elected Boards have the authority to circumvent the Board of Selectmen policy.

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 reminded residents to please stay diligent and safe and to stay away from Cislak Drive. He also gave a shout out to the Police and Fire Department and First Responders for their hard work and quick action during an accident on Sunday night.

Mr. Silva stated that he heard an alarming statistic that 30-40% of the restaurants in this country will not be able to survive the pandemic and would encourage those that can afford to get take out to support their local restaurants. Also, wants to let everyone know to stay safe and stay home.

Mr. Goncalves in regards to the issues on Cislak Drive and the complaints that the Board of Selectmen have received from residents we are hoping that everyone is taking this seriously. In regards to the COVID-19 our Town is doing much better than others. Please remember to be safe and wear a mask whenever possible.

Mr. Debarge gave a shout out to the staff at the Senior Center for their hard work with their brown bag meal program. They prepared 72 meals today for lunch and it has gone up each week. Mr. Debarge thanked the people in Town that are making masks. The Senior Center has been handing them out if they are needed.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to adjourn this meeting at 7:02 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.