The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, May 19, 2020 began at 5:30 p.m. Remote participation due to COVID-19.

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

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Visitations:

5:45 – Sara Szczbak, Palmer Community Development Director – Item #118 – Regional CDBG Grant Opportunity for Microenterprise Assistance (Business) and Public Social Services

Ms. Szczbak explained that the CDBG is the source for the state Housing and Development and they are encouraging regional applications for this grant. There are two parts to the grant, one is for Microenterprise Assistance and the other is for Social Services. The Microenterprise assistance is to assist low-moderate income business owners & residents who have had negative affects due to the Coronavirus. The business owner must have 5 or less employees and have low-moderate income. The funding is for businesses to cover losses due to the Coronavirus NOT for capital improvements. The Social Services end of it is for local food pantries, meal deliveries and Senior Centers who are providing Coronavirus related services. If the Town is interested in partnering with them, Ms. Szczbak would need to speak with Town staff and possibly have information put on the Town website and she would administer the grant on behalf of the Town of Ludlow.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the grant includes residents that are on the RAFT program?

Ms. Szczbak explained that the RAFT program would not be included in these monies. The CDBG would be distributing that money directly to the agencies that already administers RAFT. Ms. Szczbak believes that Wayfinders handles the RAFT program. The restrictions for RAFT are for those that earn 30 – 50% of median income and the Coronavirus money would be for residents that earn between 50—80% of median income so it would serve a different segment of the population.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the Housing Authority should reach out to Wayfinders to get more information on the RAFT program for the residents of Ludlow?

Ms. Szczbak agreed that the Town's Housing Authority should reach out to Wayfinders in regards to the RAFT program. Ms. Szczbak also explained that there is no additional cost to the Town, as it is included in the grant for administrative costs. There is a maximum of $400,000 for the grant but they would need to see what the needs of the community are. A flyer would be posted on the Town website to let businesses know that this is available and to contact Ms. Szczbak directly to apply.

Mrs. Fernandes asked what the cap is on the moderate income for the business.

Ms. Szczbak explained that it is based on the owner of the business' household size. For a household of 4, it is a limit of $68,300 for their gross household income and for a household of one, it would be $47,850.00

Mrs. Fernandes asked if there was a cap for the social services portion and would "meals on wheels" qualify for this?

Ms. Szczbak stated that there is not a cap on the social services side. They would have to do some research to see how many meals are being provided for example. Ms. Szczbak believes that "meals on wheels" would also qualify. The deadline to apply for the grant is June 5th. This information can be found on the State Procurement website. Currently, she is speaking with Monson and Ludlow.

Mr. DeBarge asked what it means to be an entitlement community and why they cannot apply under this grant?

Ms. Szczbak explained that the State received the funding from Federal HUD and HUD designated that certain communities and they get their funding direction from HUD. Those communities are bigger, needier communities like Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke. HUD awards money to the State of Massachusetts to redistribute to other communities who are not as needy as the big cities.

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Mrs. Fernandes asked if this was going to have to be paid back and if there would be more specific details for business and residents that wanted to apply?

Ms. Szczbak explained that as long as communities were truthful on their applications, then no it would not have to be repaid. She also explained that the State left it as flexible as possible due to the nature of the businesses will vary, as well as what expenses they incurred from the coronavirus.

Correspondence:

111. Alex Shubert, Manager – National Processing Center, ISO Public Protection Classification: 03/3Y

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to file. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

112. Board to approve a request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Firefighter as a result of an incident that occurred on April 21, 2020.

Moved by Mr. Rosenblum, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve a request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Firefighter as a result of an incident that occurred on April 21, 2020. Vote 4-0. All in favor.

112a. Board to approve a request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on May 3, 2020.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to approve a request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on May 3, 2020. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

112b. Board to approve a request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on May 3, 2020.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to approve a request to charge off medical expenses and lost wages to Chapter 41, Section 111F for an injury sustained by a Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred on May 3, 2020. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

113. Aimee M. Henderson, COVID-19 Public Information Officer, Columbia Gas of Massachusetts – informing the Board of an update of their operations as the COVID-19 epidemic continues.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Rosenblum to file. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

114. Joe Mitchell, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource – informing the Board of an update of their operations as the COVID-19 epidemic continues.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to file. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

115. Joe Mitchell, Community Relations & Economic Development Specialist, Eversource – informing the Board to remind customers to be vigilant against scams.

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

116. Beverly C. Tokarz – requesting to be appointed as a Democratic poll worker. Democratic Town Committee Chairman recommends appointment.

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Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to appoint Beverly Tokarz to be a Democratic election officer for the Town of Ludlow. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

117. Michael Heffernan, Secretary of Administration and Finance, Executive Office of Administration and Finance – The Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) includes funds for Massachusetts governments to use to pay costs incurred in responding to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes for the Board to move forward with the application for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) money which is available to the Town and request that the Town Accountant coordinate with all Departments to ensure successful certifications prior to the June 5th deadline. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

118. Regional CDBG Grant Opportunity for Microenterprise Assistance (Business) and Public Social Services. Notice of Funding Opportunity through CDBG – CV grant with funds appropriated through the CARES Act of 2020.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to participate in the regional CDBG grant opportunity for Microenterprise Assistance (Business) and Public Social Services and have Palmer and Ms. Szczbak as the lead for this grant. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Unfinished Business:

Board discussed the COVID-19 crisis and updates. Mr. DeBarge explained that there are approximately 107 positive cases in Town currently. As of this past Monday, the 18th, there has been some changes to some of the restrictions, whereas essential businesses, manufacturing, construction and houses of worship are allowed to operate while keeping the gathering number at 10. On May 25th they will start to open up with lab space, office space, limited personal services such as hair salons, barber shops, pet grooming, car washes some retail with remote fulfillment, curbside pick-up and the "stay home" will change to "safe at home". June 1st there will be more changes. Still urging to wear masks, stay 6 ft away if you can, if you leave the State of Massachusetts, you are urged to quarantine for 14 days when you return to the state. Remain patient and vigilant and hope we can continue opening the state.

Mr. Silva Mass.gov/opening has a list of openings of business and what to do and not to do. Suggests that residents read that information.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that other states had to resend some of the openings because they were getting spikes in the virus. Please adhere to the policies of businesses, such as wearing a mask.

Mr. Goncalves would like to know if the Police had to enforcement actions or has the community been pretty low key and cooperative?

Mr. DeBarge has not received any information from the Police Department that they had to enforce using a mask or any type of altercation because of this. Mr. DeBarge also explained that when he goes into the local businesses, he tries to ask how things have been going with the pandemic and residents wearing masks, etc. There is about 10% that are not adhering to protocols but not to forget that people who are breathing compromised do not have to wear a mask.

Mrs. Fernandes explained that she had a horrible fight with COVID-19 and she wanted to let the public know that it was right here in Ludlow. She has also had breast cancer in the past 1 ½ years so she has been having to fight a lot recently. As the weather gets nicer, it is harder to stay home. If we continue to do the right thing, we will see positive results. Thanked all of the residents that reached out to her with love and even though certain people don't agree with her political views, they still were praying for her. Anyone who is going through this, please keep fighting. She explained how difficult it was when the medical community didn't understand this disease and wasn't really able to help her.

New Business:

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Board to discuss annual events and large gathering events held in the Town. Examples, Celebrate Ludlow, Festa, Recreation Summer Camp, LBGC Summer Camp, Thompson Pool, Haviland Pond.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves in view of the committee voting to cancel Celebrate Ludlow, the Board agrees to cancel as well. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Board agrees to leave Festa up to their own committee and to see what they want to do and take it from there.

Board agrees to have representatives from the Recreation Department, as well as the Boys and Girls Club to discuss reopening plans for the summer.

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. Silva expressed his happiness that some venues are starting to reopen and that the deaths are starting to decrease in Massachusetts. I believe the state is down to 62 deaths but encourages people to still stay safe.

Mr. Goncalves agrees with Mr. Silva that the numbers are coming down and people are taking it seriously. Very happy to have Mrs. Fernandes back and wishes that her message got out to the residents sooner. Very impressed that the business owners had signs up to wear masks before it was even mandated and that they have asked customers to leave when they are not wearing a mask. Stay safe!

Mr. Rosenblum hopes that everyone stays cautious. Please continue to practice safe social distancing. I am very happy to see businesses opening but I personally probably won't be back to work until September 1st. Have a great Memorial Day.

Mrs. Fernandes thanked everyone for all of their prayers and love. I am still having some symptoms and the doctors are not sure if it is from the COVID or what is going on so it is very important to stay safe. On a lighter note, due to the salons being closed, I have learned to cut and color my own hair! I would like to wish everyone a Happy Memorial Day and please stay safe during these times!

Mr. DeBarge welcomed Mrs. Fernandes back as well. Wanted to let everyone that he participated in a food and essentials drive for the Rotary Club at the high school and was surprised at the amount of donations they received. Mr. DeBarge also participated in the Ludlow Boys and Girls Club 70th birthday party on zoom where he was challenged by Mr. Gazda to have a cake smashed in his face. It is unfortunate that the Town cannot have the Memorial Day Parade but the Veterans services is doing everything in his power to keep the Memorial Day festivities alive by having residents decorating their yards and then it will be up on the website for all to see. To all the Gold Star Families my respect to you and your fallen family member and to all of our veterans out there my respect to you as well. Happy Memorial Day to everyone!

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mrs. Fernandes to adjourn this meeting at 6:36 p.m., not return to open session. 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.