The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, April 13, 2021 began at 5:30 p.m. Remote participation due to COVID-19.

Members Present: William Rosenblum, Chairman, Derek Debarge, James Gennette, Antonio Goncalves, and Manny Silva.

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First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Visitations:

5:30 p.m. – Police Chief Valadas – FY22 Budget New Position Request

Chief Valadas gave the Board a handout of comparable demographics for Police Departments in Massachusetts. Nine additional level I officers were requested this year and a Dispatch Supervisor. Dispatch is an area where there is usually and overage due to grants from 911. Chief Valadas believes this plan should get the Police Department through the next 10 years as far as manning is concerned. The only other position that they would possibly need would be IT but they are currently getting support from the Town.

Chief Valadas also stated that the Sergeant's position is the backbone of the Police Department because they can do anything in the department. The handout given to the Board gives an example of some of the requests the Police Department is currently receiving now.

Mr. Goncalves asked how many Sergeant's and Patrolmen the Ludlow Police Department employees currently?

Chief Valadas stated there are seven sergeants currently. There are 42 positions, however one is in the academy, one is in the military and one on injured leave and two sergeants on injured leave.

Mr. Gennette asked how many Detective's Ludlow has currently?

Chief Valadas stated there is four Detective's, two on days and two on evenings and he is requesting to increase that to eight.

Mr. Goncalves commented that West Springfield has double the number of officers then Ludlow.

Chief Valadas stated that Ludlow is the eleventh largest municipality in Western Mass. He also stated that investigative services are becoming more important because of video, audio and all of the legal requests they have to comply with. IT and cybercrime are becoming more difficult to deal with. This is bogging down officers for long periods of time and is not allowing them to be there for our citizens.

Mr. Goncalves commented about an article that he saw on the internet about 22 arrests that were made in Ludlow and only two of those were Ludlow residents.

Chief Valadas would like to continue arrests logs. They use very generic information for privacy concerns. Chief Valadas explained that the budget for dispatchers is a little over $500,000 and they just recently took on the OMES and Fire dispatching as well. By state law the department cannot have any less than nine dispatchers with two people running two different work stations 24 hours/day. The Dispatcher Supervisor can be funded by the overage's that the department usually has due to the grants. This will also free up the Sergeant as well to work on other responsibilities.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the additional $55,000 requested was for Fire and Police?

Chief Valadas explained that although it is central dispatch and Chief Pease and himself have an agreement to handle personnel jointly, the budget is strictly under the Police budget.

Mr. Silva commented that the average is about 46 total personnel in the comparable communities presented by Chief Valadas.

Chief Valadas stated that that is the average personnel, however they have much larger command staff. Ludlow only has seven Sergeants and two Lieutenants which is where the burden lies. If one Lieutenant and two Sergeants were approved then there would be no further needs for at least ten years. This will streamline in a manageable way.

Mr. Goncalves asked how much is paid extra for an officer when there is an absent Lieutenant or Sergeant?

Chief Valadas explained that currently we are paying two Sergeants that are out and then the two Acting Sergeants get paid the top step. Every single shift cost double for that position plus the two Sergeants. There are usually only two days out of the six where there is overlap, otherwise each Sergeant is working alone. They try not to pay overtime because the rate for the Sergeant is $56/hour and the Lieutenant is $65/hour. From 2020 to 2021 the overtime budget was cut by almost $121,000. If there are more Supervisors, the overtime budget should go down by an additional 40-50k.

Mr. Goncalves asked if you have a Sergeant on and the Lieutenant is absent, is the Sergeant making Lieutenant's pay?

Chief Valadas stated the Lieutenant is not replaced.

Mr. Goncalves asked if when a Sergeant is out, does a patrolman become an active Sergeant and get overtime?

Chief Valadas explained that the Lieutenant and other Sergeants get offered the overtime first due to collective bargaining and then if it's a patrolman then they get the difference in pay.

Mr. Gennette asked how long the two Sergeants extended leave is for?

Chief Valadas stated that one Sergeant has been out since July 2019 and the other since 2018 but he did come back between surgeries.

Mr. Gennette asked if there was an estimate date of return for these Sergeants?

Chief Valadas stated that one of them is waiting for approval for their disability retirement, which is expected in May and the other should be back in either August or September.

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Mr. Debarge explained that Police and Fire are the easiest two departments that there is need for. Mr. Debarge stressed that the Town of Ludlow supports our Police, Fire and First Responders more then any surrounding community. Unfortunately, our excess levy currently is $184,000 and if there is any type of emergency, the town would just not have the funds. The timing of this request is not good.

Chief Valadas rebutted Mr. Debarges comments by stating that there is currently over $3,000,000 in the stabilization fund, every piece of land has been purchased with a house on it, route 21 is turning into Memorial Drive, large corporations are investing in the Town of Ludlow and on March 17th notification was received that the American Rescue Act has slated almost $2.1 million for the Town of Ludlow and therefore believes that this is the time. This is a healthy, growing community which will have an increase in service. Three officers on the shift is not going to service our community.

Mr. Silva asked Ms. Collins about the level 2 budget and what is included in it?

Ms. Collins explained that she has been tracking things that have been requested and/or approved by the Finance Committee or the Board of Selectmen for the level II budget. There was $2,000 added back in for training, which is mandatory. IT is included due to the reclassification of the IT Director. A three-year security plan for Munis support which is required. HR and payroll automation, which has been discussed over the past two years. Emergency Management which is required. Animal Control transfer from Board of Health to the Police Department. The DPW will need an additional $41,260 to fund two new positions and the Board should revisit this request. The DPW is also requesting an additional $95,000 for storm water testing by an outside source and this is required as well. This has been done by the DPW employees in the past, but they are very short staffed right now. Council on Aging $25,000 for food for the opening of the new Senior Center and $5,000 to move their cooks to full time. Veterans

services can reduce his budget by $20,595. The School Department requested an additional $241,997 for the 2.9% increase. However, they have COVID funds which they can use differently then the Town so if we cannot fund the $241,997 it won't be the end of the world. If all these requests are approved, then you will have $184,157 in excess levy. As far as the ARCA funds, nothing is set in stone and we have been told to budget conservatively. There may be money for infrastructure, but they are not to be used for permanently funded items.

Mr. Goncalves asked what the School Department needed the funds for?

Ms. Collins stated that it is not for one particular item. The School originally requested 6% increase to stay at level budget funding. It had to be reduced to 2% in order to stay within the levy. The Superintendent requested 2.79% to stay at the level service.

Mr. Silva asked if the Finance Committee has approved the level II budget?

Ms. Collins stated they have not approved them yet. The only things that were approved so far were the departments who have not requested level II increases.

Mr. Silva asked if the $95,000 that the DPW requested for storm water is mandated or is it just the actual testing is mandated?

Ms. Villano explained that the Board of Public Works is stating that the DPW employees were doing the work to offset about $40,000 of the $95,000 in the past. However, they are now stating that they don't have the manpower to do this any longer.

Mr. Silva understands that, but this would have to be included in the budget regardless.

Ms. Villano stated that the DPW cut their budget and then came back and increased it when they realized they could not cut some of these things out.

Ms. Collins agreed with Ms. Villano.

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Ms. Villano stated that the $95,000 should be the only thing added back into their budget. Anything that goes over the $184,000 is going to put the Town in a 2 ½ override unless the Board of Selectmen would like to cut other departments in order to add to other budgets. According to our legislatures we are going to get $2.1 million and we could get more, however we don't know what we can use these funds for yet and this is to sustain us over the next couple of years to help balance everything out due to the pandemic.

Ms. Collins stated that the DPW did explained that even though they are requesting the $95,000 they are still going to try and use employees in order to keep the cost down. They cannot do everything in house, but they are going to try to do as much as they can.

Mr. Silva stated that it looks like there will be a $107 increase without the DPW request.

Ms. Villano stated that the tax bill will go from a -$.13 to a + $.03.

Mr. Debarge added that as far as the stabilization fund, the Board of Selectmen has made a concerted effort over the past five years to put money into this fund for security purposes.

Ms. Collins stated the Town's goal is to keep the free cash and the stabilization fund between 3-5% and this goal has not been reached. Once the goal is reached you can use some of that for large ticket items that need to be addressed in Town, but we are not there yet.

Mr. Silva asked what percentage the stabilization fund is at?

Ms. Collins can get that information for the Board but does not have it tonight. The increased stabilization fund will give the Town a good bond rating as well as a cushion.

Mr. Debarge asked if the responsibility to pay onto the...has changed with COVID?

Ms. Collins stated the liability has gone up over the years. It's close to $80 million.

Ms. Villano stated that the recommendation was to put $500,000 per year in to the...

Ms. Collins stated there has only been $50,000 per year allotted for this. We are trying to increase this to $100,000 per year but this year is not the year to do that. You could take the money out of free cash and put it in...

Mr. Rosenblum believes the only way to add a position would be to cut overtime, but you can't project the overtime. To add two split Sergeants, you would have to cut $150,00 from overtime.

Mr. Silva asked if there is a way to motion to adjust the budget if the funds allow for it?

Ms. Villano stated that anyone can make an amendment to a line item at the Town Meeting. You could also add an article to the October Meeting as well. My fear is we will not know before Town Meeting. The DLS report states that we should not count on this money just yet.

Chief Valadas asked if he could receive the classification for at least one or two more positions by July 1st? Then he would ask for the rest at the October meeting. The Narcotics Unit needs to be increased, having only one Officer by himself is not working. An Officer and a split Sergeant would be a little over $100,000 and would help immensely.

Mr. Gennette asked if the Lieutenant's position would mean bringing a Sergeant up?

Chief Valadas stated yes, however it would be an acting position for now because there isn't an active civil service exam for Lieutenants right now.

Mr. Goncalves wanted to confirm what the $100,000 gets again?

Chief Valadas stated that is a split Sergeant at $79, 821 and $55,000 for a Patrolman for a total of $130,000 for both.

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Mr. Goncalves asked if the $99,000 golf deficit was real?

Ms. Collins is hoping it will not be in the deficit and they will break even.

Mr. Goncalves is doing well and could possibly not be a $99,000 deficit this year. Mr. Goncalves also asked about the $150,000 for cable in the auditorium.

Ms. Collins stated that the cable money comes from the appropriations and does not affect the budget in any way.

Chief Valadas stated that the Police Department turned over $100,000 to the Town last year.

Ms. Collins stated that yes in revenue.

Chief Valadas is going to try and get as much as he can in grants for the Patrolmen over the next few years.

Ms. Villano stated there was an article last year at Town Meeting to fund the deficit to overtime, which would offset the revenue that came in.

Ms. Collins stated there was.

Mr. Debarge stated that he feels it is irresponsible to fund any positions at this time. Once the funds are received, we could revisit this. There are contractual obligations with Unions that could lead to salary increases in the next fiscal year.

Ms. Collins reminded the Board that the Town has committed to doing a classification study and it's $15,000 for Management positions and $15,000 for the LASTOS employees. Therefore, the money in excess levy would be needed to fund the salary increases if necessary.

Chief Valadas asked if the Police Department would be included in the classification study?

Mr. Rosenblum stated it was only for Town Hall employees.

Ms. Villano stated that the study does not have to be done at the beginning of the fiscal year and any commitments do not have to be implemented until the following fiscal year. Ms. Villano also mentioned that some of the Managers and maybe a Selectmen would like to meet and implement a strict time frame as to when a classification change can be done during the fiscal year because she had asked the Chief on several occasions to come up with his 3 and 5-year plan, etc. Ms. Villano asked if the Chief could replace the two Sergeants with a split Sergeant position?

Chief Valadas explained that this will not help him because he has six Sergeants currently, two on each shift and if he replaced the two that are leaving with a split Sergeant, it would still leave a hole where the two full time positions were. The minimum of a split Sergeant and one Narcotic's Detective I would have a working unit July 1.

Mr. Gennette asked what the impact for the Town will be for the Sergeant alone?

Chief Valadas stated that would be around $79,821. A new Patrolman is less than $55,161 which is what Ms. Collins projected.

Mr. Debarge asked if it was approved would the Chief move someone up to that new position?

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Chief Valadas stated he would do that.

Mr. Goncalves believes they should hold off until the Finance Committee weighs in on this.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees that this should wait until they know how much the Town will be getting from the Government.

Mr. Silva is very uncomfortable with having a Narcotics Officer alone.

Chief Valadas thanked Mr. Silva.

Ms. Collins stated that she can revisit the money that is received from MGM as well. It looks like the Town received $100,000.

Chief Valadas stated that the officer that is out on leave with a broken foot was a direct cost from MGM. The suspect was dealing drugs at MGM and then ended up in Ludlow and fought with the officer and broke his foot.

Mr. Gennette supports getting a split Sergeant for the Police Department.

Ms. Collins would like to know which position would be the most helpful right now.

Chief Valadas stated that the Sergeant is the most versatile position.

Ms. Villano asked the Chief why he is stating that the Sergeant is the most versatile position, but he wants someone in Narcotics and a Sergeant can't work in Narcotics?

Chief Valadas stated that he could put a Sergeant in Narcotics, but you could get more out of a Sergeant in the DB. When he goes to the Finance Committee meeting I would ask for $100,000 for a Sergeant.

Mr. Debarge stated that there is no reason an Officer would have to go out alone. The Chief could backfill that position with a Patrolman. Mr. Debarge feels that this needs to wait until the funds come from the Government/ARCA.

Mr. Goncalves stated that Ms. Collins already stated earlier that the ARCA money cannot be used for salaries. Therefore, if the Chief were to wait it wouldn't make a difference.

Mr. Rosenblum commented that if we are able to use the $99,000 from Golf and the $75,000 from MGM we will have funded the position without even increasing the budget. The Finance Committee will know tomorrow.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Debarge to approve the Sergeant position requested by Chief Valadas beginning July 1 if we can fund the position without increasing the budget. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Debarge to change the classification to add one Sergeant position to the Police Department. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE

72. William Rosenblum, Chairman Capital Improvement Planning Committee – recommendations for the FY2022 Capital Planning Budget Article.

    Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve the Capital Improvement Plan for $479,419.29. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

73. Mary Pichetti, Director of Capital Planning, Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) – forwarding review comments of the Constructions Change Orders 16-22 for the Harris Brook Elementary School Project.

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

74. John R. Maher, Director of Governmental Affairs, Charter Communications – notification of upcoming channel line-up changes.

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

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74a. John R. Maher, Director of Governmental Affairs, Charter Communications – informing the Board of rebranding in the channel line-up and programing information.

    Moved by Mr. Gennette, seconded by Mr. Debarge to file. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

75. Hampden County Regional Retirement Board – informing the Board of their audit findings and Board actions.

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

76. George D. Leastman – informing Chief Valadas of his resignation as Dispatcher for the Ludlow Police Department as of the completion of his shift on April 3, 2021.

    Moved by Mr. Gennette, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to accept Mr. Leastman's resignation effective April 3, 2021 and to send a thank you letter for his service. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

77. Board Reorganizations – Hubbard Memorial Board of Trustees and Conservation Commission.

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

78. Louis Gilli, Environmental Engineer Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC) – will be conducting their 2021 second quarter inspections of its natural gas pipeline during this calendar quarter.

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

79. Springfield Water and Sewer Commission – HAA5 Water Quality Violation and Public Notification.

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

80. Beverly Barry, Commission on Disability Chairman – informing the Board the Commission on Disability is seeking new members to join.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Gennette to advertise for new members to join the Commission on Disability on cable access and website and possibly interview. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mr. Gennette discussed the Town employee evaluation process. Ms. Ribeiro, HR Director will get her recommendations for the Board of Selectmen by May 4th. Mr. Gennette will work with Ms. Ribeiro and the Unions to establish this process but recommends waiting until May 4th when Ms. Ribeiro has her recommendations.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Silva to approve and sign the Common Victualer Liquor License for Laires, Inc. d/b/a Primavera Restaurant. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

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NEW BUSINESS

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to act on behalf of the Board and sign the new contract with CBS/Xerox for the printers and copiers. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

MISCELLANEOUS

Mr. Debarge to discuss West Ave/trash. Mr. Debarge explained that this needs to be picked up, it looks horrible. He asked the State and they will not do anything because of where the trash is. Hampden County Corrections will not address it right now due to COVID restrictions. He is going to reach out to the Rotary Club and try to get some volunteers to pick up the trash. Mr. Debarge spoke to Ms. Villano about getting an officer to do road detail during this event. He also spoke with Mr. Santos, Chairman of the Board of Public Works about getting visibility road side vests to wear during this.

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 stated that he and Mr. Goncalves attended a meeting with the proper boards present regarding the Mountainview Trailer Park. He stated it was a very productive meeting and there will be a new buyer coming in and intends to clean it up. This will be very good for the Town and hopefully will not bear costs to the Town.

Mr. Gennette wanted to let the Board know that the Our Lady of Fatima Church discovered vandalism on Friday. Someone had set the arch on fire over the statue of our Lady of Fatima and asked if anyone knows who did this to please contact the Ludlow Fire Department or the Church Rectory. He is disgusted that something like this could happen in our Town.

Mr. Debarge stated that there has been a lot of issues with unkept property in town and he is concerned about this. We have dealt with Highland Ave, the trailer park, Prospect Street and now there is one on Tower Road. Mr. Debarge advised the residents, if they see anything to please keep the Board in the loop so it can be addressed. Wanted to give heartfelt condolences to the families related to the victim in the motor vehicle accident on Saturday. It was a tragedy. He also wanted to thank the first responders and his heart goes out to all involved.

Mr. Goncalves would like to update residents of the scams. People are getting text messages to confirm deliveries from Amazon or Fed Ex and then they are able to track you. Please do not confirm these

messages and be careful. A lot of compliments were received for the Senior Center and the lunch menu. Wanted to thank the staff at the Senior Center on what a great job they are doing.

Mr. Rosenblum stated that he thinks everyone is going through 'COVID tiredness' with everything happening in the Town. Everyone needs an act of kindness right now. Let's be positive. Mr. Rosenblum also volunteered for trash pickup with Mr. Debarge.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Debarge to adjourn this meeting at 8:04 p.m., and not return to open session, and to enter Executive Session for the purposes of discussing a pending litigation matter. To discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigation position of the public body and the Chair so declares. 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.

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