The Meeting of the Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, November 2, 2021 began at 5:30 p.m. Remote participation due to COVID-19.

Members Present: Derek DeBarge, James Gennette, Antonio Goncalves, William Rosenblum and Manuel Silva.

First Order of Business: The Pledge of Allegiance

Visitations:

5:30 p.m. – Kim Downing, Finance Committee – preliminary budget process discussion

Ms. Downing explained the she is a representative of the Finance Committee and wanted to go over what the budget process was prior to COVID. Prior to COVID, the budget sub-committee would meet early and they would have their representatives come together and look at the numbers with the Town Accountant to get an overall idea of what would be reasonable parameters and then submit their recommendations to the Board of Selectmen. This was a good starting point. Then the departments had a framework to work within to do their budgets. The Finance Committee would then do a deep dive into every single line item with every department. There was a partnership between the Finance Committee and the departments and they helped them put together a proper budget within the guidelines. The Finance Committee would take a vote and either approve the budget or make cuts. It was important to come together with the Board of Selectmen, so there was a united front at the Town Meeting. This instilled confidence in the Board of Selectmen, the departments, as well as the meeting members. Last year the committee was a little concerned with the way things went.

Ms. Collins stated that there was a lot of confusion in terms of what the process was last year. She stated this process has been in place since at least fiscal 20. She is not sure what the difference is in terms of how this process is versus the process that Ms. Downing just described.

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Ms. Downing stated that the process is totally different and she has never seen the memo that Ms. Collins referred to.

Ms. Collins explained that a spreadsheet was created which had the entire recap on it and the budget and information was plugged in to show what positions were approved, if they wanted a 2% increase added to the budget, etc. This has been ongoing since at least 2018. This recap spreadsheet is shown to the budget sub-committee as well. The recap was put in place so that the Finance Committee could see what the tax rate would be and how it would affect the budget and then a decision could be made to approve or not approve it.

Ms. Downing explained that the Finance Committee were not included in any conversations. She stated that from the budget sub-committee which is input from key personnel, the Finance Committee doesn't exist there. The committee feels that they are not included in any informational or at any level for their input. In the past, the Finance Committee was able to work with the departments, there was a guideline, and relationships were formed with the departments. There are also liaisons that go out specifically and meet one on one to help the departments through this process. The Finance Committee just wants clarification about the process.

Ms. Villano stated that the budget sub-committee met last year and finance is on the budget sub-committee. It is a member of Finance, a Select person, the Assessors, the Town Accountant, herself and the School Superintendent. Once the budget sub-committee met, they determined where they thought they should be. They sent the memos out to the department and Kim did the recap. The DOR is recommending all communities do their budget off of their recap now. The Town Accountant and Ms. Villano worked together in between all of the meetings with Finance and budget sub-committee to finesse the budget as it goes along. Ms. Villano presents the operating budget. This happens with the participation of a lot of people. The process last year was no different. There were some changes that happened last year but that was due to the pandemic, not the process itself. Ms. Villano and Kim met for fiscal year 23 to start the preliminary recap because there are a lot of departments that are asking for new positions, which are due by the 16th. This will help the Board to see what the Town can afford and not afford. The preliminary recap sheet has been done but the sub-committee has not met yet. A preliminary discussion was had with the previous Chairman to the Finance Committee.

Ms. Collins explained that the Finance Committee still has liaisons that meet with all the departments prior to them submitting a request to her office. This is where the Finance Committee should be able to give the departments the guidance and to help them to prepare their requests because once those requests come to her, they go into the recap and then the Board determines whether or not they can afford them.

Ms. Villano explained that the budgets have been sent to the departments and that's it so far.

Ms. Downing stated that they usually have more information and input even before it is sent to the departments. Somewhere it has lagged and she doesn't want the departments to be confused like last year. She said she hadn't seen the recap prior to yesterday.

Ms. Villano stated that was because it hadn't been given to the Selectmen yet.

Ms. Downing explained that the sub-committee met, formed a framework as to where they should be going by looking at the numbers from the Assessor, the Treasurer and the Town Accountant. Then they would make a decision on how to move forward and then that guideline went to the departments. Once the Board of Selectmen approved what the sub-committee recommended then it went to the departments. The Finance Committee goes line item by line with each department. They would then request Kim to work up the numbers. Once they voted, the Finance Committee would meet with the Board of Selectmen and give their recommendations.

Mr. DeBarge explained that he doesn't see any difference in anything except for last year when there were requests in May for more personnel, which has been addressed this year already with the November 16th deadline. He thinks this written process is fantastic. Last year the Finance Committee did not agree with the Board of Selectmen on a few things but that's the difference in committees.

Ms. Downing stated that there has never been an issue with going to Town Meeting with amendments. The Finance Committee would sometimes agree to disagree at a Town Meeting but they always came to a consensus. She will bring the information back to her committee and they will move forward from there.

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Ms. Collins explained that the only things that she has done thus far is print the recap with the requests that have been made but nothing has been approved or discussed as of yet.

Ms. Villano explained that the only change that was made was due to the recommendation from the Finance Committee and that was that the Board of Selectmen not approve any new positions. Therefore, all departments requesting new positions had to come before the Board prior to the whole budget to have the positions changed and classification changes. This is where they are in the process. Once the Board of Selectmen decide which positions, they will be approving, the whole budget process will proceed. Even though they may approve these positions, they may not pass the budget process. The next meeting will be the finalization of their approval to the classification plan for any new positions and then the budget process starts in full swing. The preliminary recap is just informational right now to help make proper decisions.

Ms. Downing stated that the Finance Committee feels that by the time the departments got to them, the budget had already been put to bed and any changes that they wanted to make, they couldn't make except through an amendment. She does not agree with this process. She is going to send a copy of the budget guidelines to Bev and have her distribute to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Silva believes that this process is the correct process because there is no need for the sub-committee to meet until the Board of Selectmen approves the increase. He believes that they are on the same page and it will get to the sub-committee once the departments give their requests.

Ms. Collins stated that the Finance Committee reviews the level II budget.

Mr. Goncalves agrees that the guidelines are a little confusing and the Finance Committee should be given the opportunity to review the budget prior to when the memo states they do.

Ms. Downing stated that the Board of Selectmen approved the budget last year before the Finance Committee had the opportunity to finish meeting with all the departments. The way the guidelines read now, it will be the same and the committee will have no input until the end.

Mr. Silva would like to fix this and move forward.

Ms. Downing would like to get an answer prior to the 17th what the decision will be from the Board of Selectmen as that is the Finance Committee's next meeting.

Mr. Gennette stated that is why they gave all the departments the deadline of November 16th to have all of their personnel requests in and the Board does appreciate the Finance Committee's input. However, going into the Town Meeting as a united front is not necessary. Sometimes it's okay to be at odds a bit.

6:15 p.m. – Daniel Valadas, Police Chief – FY 2023 Police Budget

Chief Valadas read the letter he sent to the Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, Mr. Rosenblum on October 7, 2021 regarding upcoming staffing shortages and new training mandates. He also stated that in regards to the new recruitment list that was generated in September 2021 there will be a one year wait time from the date of the first preliminary application to the first day of service. The new Sergeants recruit list will probably be coming in November 2022. Looking at the statistics, they are still dealing with overdoses and they've had two fatalities in the past two years. They have gotten away from having two officers in a cruiser but would like to go back to that. He is proposing having three Sergeants on each shift so there will always be two scheduled. With the proposed Lieutenant; then there would be three Detectives during the day and three at night. The second shift has a little more patrol than the days or midnight. There have been additional homicides in the Town recently also. They average 1,600 to 1,700 incidences, 500 reportable accidents, as well property incidences. Every incident has to have a report written. The LPD must have two dispatchers logged in 24 hours/day. There are three per diem's but a supervisor is needed.

Chief Valadas stated that the 'bridge' is what the MPTC came up with for the SPO's and will now have to work 9 ½ hours per week and he does not have the budget or hours for that. On top of that they have to do an 80-hour cadence online, pass a law exam and procedure exam. Once they pass the exam, they have to do a full three weeks of emergency vehicle operation, defensive tactics and firearms training. Once they complete all of this and the 2,400 hours, they would be eligible for POST certification. However, they could go anywhere in the state, they don't have to stay in Ludlow. Some communities are just opting to get rid of Special Police Officers all together, which they may also have to do. Chief Valadas also stated that right now there are two vacancies made by the promotions of the two Sergeants, the next vacancy will be from the officer that resigned as of the 21st and the next will be the anticipated disability retirement of the Sergeant and the last one will be the officer that is anticipating leaving in December for a total of five. He also has several officers that have applied for the State Police. There is a new list, which a PT test was done for the first ten candidates that are interested, but it would take a year to get them on the first day of service. Chief Valadas is hoping the new positions could be filled after July 1 with the new budget but they would use the list because there's at least 20 people from Ludlow. They have only requested the first ten so far. Any new patrolmen positions that approved for July 2022, the patrolmen would not have their first shift until winter or spring of 2023. There is an active list for Sergeants positions and they could be filled after July 1st. The replacement patrolmen will not be street ready until late winter or spring of 2023. The academies are overwhelmed. A lot of Officers are retiring right now. Dispatch has had a turnover over the past few years as well. However, he could hire dispatchers pretty quickly, but there is a training period with them as well. They did hire a per diem and a full-time dispatcher recently.

Mr. Gennette asked if Chief Valadas will promote someone to the Dispatch Supervisor and then hire another dispatcher? He stated that he likes the idea of flaggers. He believes that the local businesses would prefer that and it would save money. As far as the Special Police Officers, they don't know who is willing to do the training yet. He also stated that he does not like not having and SRO at the high school.

Chief Valadas stated that promoting a current Dispatcher to Supervisor would be ideal and would free up his Sergeant who is currently doing the role as Dispatch Supervisor. He reiterated that he still does

not have the hours for the Special Police Officers, so he does not believe they will be able to retain them. He can fill the SRO position but it would take an officer off of patrol and they do have to take NASRO training as well. Currently, the SRO must be an officer with at least three years of experience and they must have a four-year college degree. He has a few officers that would be willing to do it, however, they will need to pay overtime in order to fill the vacant patrol shift.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the flagmen solve anything that the Chief was there tonight and if the increased training mandates is a cost to the Town?

Chief Valadas explained that it does not because when someone requests detail, it goes to the Police Department first and then if they cannot fill it then it would go to the flagger. A contractor cannot ask for a flagger only. These new positions he's requesting would set up the department for at least 5-10 years. It would reduce the amount of overtime as well. The number of recruits coming in must be increased because there is an exodus going out. Three Sergeants per shift would be ideal. Chief Valadas stated that the new training is a cost to the Town. He also stated that the body cams alone for Ludlow will cost $200,000.

Mr. Gennette asked trained officers can they leave for another city or town?

Chief Valadas stated that they can leave to a non-civil service town like Wilbraham but they cannot go to a civil service city or town without the approval from the Chiefs of both towns or cities. He reminded the Board that the Massachusetts State Police have over 400 officers that are ready to retire or leave the department.

Mr. Goncalves asked if any of the State Troopers that want to leave would come to a municipality?

Chief Valadas stated that only one has inquired to join the Ludlow Police Department. The Governor may block every transfer also.

Mr. DeBarge stated that he loves the Special Police Officers and they are vital to the department however, with all of the mandates that are here it does not look like we will be able to maintain them on the force. He does not believe you should have flaggers in this Town. He also doesn't believe the Police Department needs 9 new positions either way.

Mr. Goncalves asked if the benefits for these positions was 30%?

Ms. Collins explained that the benefits would be approximately $400-500,000 for these new 9 positions.

Mr. DeBarge asked what the response time was for LPD? National average is 10 minutes.

Chief Valadas stated no more than 4 minutes unless they are short staffed. They also recently purchased two plate readers last year but more are needed.

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6:30 p.m. – Kim Collins, Town Accountant – FY 2023 Accounting Budget

Ms. Collins explained that the accounting office currently consists of The Town Accountant and two full-time employees that are classified as Administrative Assistants and are in the LATOSS Union. In 2019 the L-III position retired and at the point I requested to move the Administrative Assistant L-IV position to the management position of Assistant Town Accountant and the Administrative Assistant L-III to be reclassified to Accounting Clerk L-IV, Step 1. In June 2021 the L-III that was hired in 2019 vacated that position and the retiree has been helping out for 6-10 hours per week, which is just keeping them afloat. With all of the new roles that accounting has taken on, these positions will no longer be doing clerical type work. The Assistant Town Accountant could assume the Town Accountant's role if she was not available as well. This would cost $4,000 for FY22 and $14,000 FY23. The L-III position would be defunded at this point.

Mr. Silva would be on board with that. Most towns have the assistant to the department heads as a non-union position.

Ms. Collins also explained that she would need to request a transfer from the Finance Committee for the $4,000 but she has money in her budget due to losing the L-III position in June but will need to hire in the next month or so.

Ms. Villano stated that the new position would be a non-union position. The new position would need to be advertised.

Ms. Ribeiro agreed with Mr. Silva that most assistants to department heads are non-union positions. Town Counsel was contacted about this and does not see a problem. A plan as to what accounting is going to do with the LATOSS L-III position needs to be in place so the union can be notified.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve the request by the Town Accountant to add the position of Assistant Accountant in a non-union position and eliminate the union position L-III. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

CORRESPONDENCE

208. Joe Alves, Assistant Assessor – requesting the Board to schedule our Fiscal Year 2022 Tax Rate Classification Hearing for Tuesday, November 23, 2021.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. Gennette to schedule Mr. Alves on Tuesday, November 23, 2021 for the Tax Rate Classification Hearing. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

209. 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 from October 2021.

Moved by Mr. Gennette, seconded by Mr. Silva 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 from October 2021. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

209a. 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 October 14, 2021.

Moved by Mr. Gennette, 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 Police Officer as a result of an incident that occurred from October 2021. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

210 William Griffith, National Correctional Employees Union (NCEU) Labor Representative – requesting the Board to compensate the dispatch personnel with hazard pay due to the COVID-19 virus.

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

211. Betty Kibbe, Ludlow Historical Commission – advising the Board – Westmass Area Development Corporation is proposing the removal of Building 199 located in the Ludlow Mill property.

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

212. Walter Craven, Resident – letter of interest to serve on the Ludlow 250th Semi-Quincentennial Celebration Committee.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to appoint Walter Craven to serve on the Ludlow 250th Semi-Quincentennial Celebration Committee. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

213. Michael Flanagan, Director of Department of Labor Standards – advising of statewide approval for early openings by establishments on Columbus and Veterans Day 2021.

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

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214. Brian Shameklis, Safety Committee Chairman – recommending the Board contact Eversource Energy to replace a street light at the intersection of Booth Street and Center Street due to a vehicle crash.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge to have Ellie sent a letter to Eversource to have this completed promptly. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

214a. Brian Shameklis, Safety Committee Chairman – recommending to the Board contact Eversource Energy to discuss upgrading the street lights in the Town to LED.

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

215. Lieutenant Michael N. Brennan, Ludlow Police Department – seeking approval from the Board to hold the Annual Sgt. Joshua D. Desforges Walk/Run Challenge on Saturday, April 30, 2022 and to use any Town owned facilities and roadways as needed.

Moved by Mr. Silva, seconded by Mr. DeBarge to approve the request for the Annual Sgt. Joshua D. Desforges Walk/Run Challenge on Saturday, April 30, 2022 and to use any Town owned facilities and roadways as needed. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve and sign Executive Session Meeting Minutes of February 16, 2021 with all members present except Mr. Gennette. Vote 4-0-1. One Abstention.

NEW BUSINESS

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Gennette to approve and sign the Common Victualler's License for Joyful Juice & Shakes. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

Moved by Mr. DeBarge, seconded by Mr. Goncalves to approve and Chairman to sign the change order between the Town and ACD Telecom for the Radio Communication Project. Vote 5-0. All in favor.

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Perused Selectmen Meeting Minutes of June 22, 2021.

Perused Selectmen Meeting Minutes of July 13, 2021.

Perused Selectmen Meeting Minutes of August 3, 2021.

BOARD UPDATES/MISCELLANEOUS

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. Gennette wanted to recognize the dispatchers and the work they do. They are an important part of our Town. He understands it is a difficult job.

Mr. Silva asked residents to stay vigilant and safe.

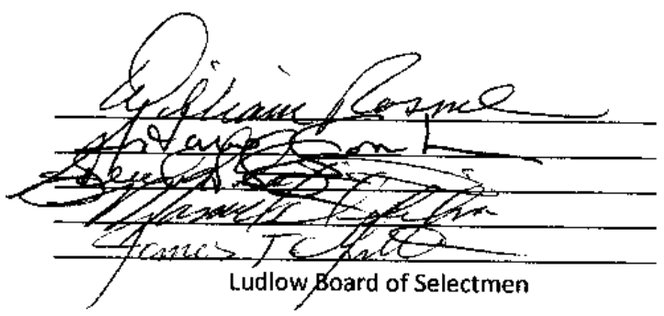
Mr. DeBarge wanted to remind residents that you cannot put signs on telephone poles. He was able to replace the American flags at Island Pond Cemetery prior to Veterans Day. He also reminded veterans that there will be a pig roast at Vanished Valley this Saturday for Veterans from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. The Veterans Day Ceremony will be on this year, which is great.

Mr. Goncalves understands that residents are having a difficult time with the trash fee and the tax increase, etc. Asked that residents are patient and watch the budget process unfold over the next few

weeks. Please know that just the hotel in town pays over $200,000 a year in taxes and the restaurants pay over $250,000 annually in meal taxes.

Mr. Rosenblum agrees with Mr. Silva to be vigilant and take care of yourself. Unfortunately, we are the lowest vaccinated county in the State but at least the numbers are dropping. Think about others as well as yourself. Trick or treaters were out this year but not as much as in past years but it was good to see the kids out again.

Moved by Mr. Goncalves, seconded by Mr. DeBarge to adjourn this meeting at 7:56 p.m., and 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.

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